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Masters of the Wilderness

By

CHARLES BERT REED, M.D.
Author of "First Great Canadian"

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TO

MY FATHER AND MOTHER

IN AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE

Preface

The most insistent fact in history is the struggle between man and Nature, or between man and man with Nature for the prize.

Everywhere the puny human forces have dashed themselves with gallant idealism or reckless enthusiasm against the obduracy of primeval things.

In America the effort has not been in vain nor devoid of dramatic interest. A myriad of industrial adventures have found success, and the papers herewith offered may possibly renew a flagging interest in the first phases of the comprehensive movement which now takes so conspicuous a part in our national life.

History and story, it is said, are both narratives, but while history is regarded merely as a record, story stimulates the imagination.

In truth history should stimulate more powerfully than fiction, for it concerns the ideals which have moved mankind. The greed of commerce, the greed of thought, the greed of faith, and the greed of love are alike masters of our destiny.

If kindling the mind is the mark of literary excellence, then it belongs to the historian, as to the novelist, to present his subject so that events will appear, not only in due order, but with appropriate values and the necessary climax.

This is particularly true in the narrative of inherently adventurous persons or peculiarly dramatic events. These lives or actions must be reinvested, if possible, not only with the atmosphere of their time, but with those unconscious accessory features which are visible only to a sympathetic posterity. Neither the romantic nor the indifferent, the lavish nor the sordid can be overlooked without bald misrepresentation. Every chronicler, however veracious in intent, must pass his material through his own personality, be it colored or neutral. It is this which develops the human interest and keeps history in its rightful place as a branch of literature.

In reproducing these romantic episodes of our exploration era the writer believes that he has neither exaggerated the color nor distorted the facts of that intensely human period. He realizes that he is open to reproach for not keeping more closely to modern methods of historical presentation, but in adopting the light rather than the solemn style, he is convinced that this particular subject receives a not inappropriate dress, and that a page which can be read without fatigue need not necessarily be untruthful.

This new edition of the "Masters of the Wilderness" is made possible through the generosity of the Chicago Historical Society, and its extreme devotion to developments in the Mississippi valley. The opportunity is,

therefore, grasped by the writer to express his appreciation to the Society and to add the subsidiary papers which are so vitally allied to the titular essay.

In compiling and arranging his material the author has used unsparingly every available source of information, both primary and secondary. Most of these works are mentioned in the appended bibliography, and to them the writer gladly acknowledges his indebtedness. Thanks are also due to Miss Lillian Quealy who assisted with the manuscript, and to Miss Caroline M. McIlvaine for many courtesies.

C. B. R.

December, 1913

Table of Contents

PAGE

THE MASTERS OF THE WILDERNESS . . . 1
A Study of the Hudson's Bay Company from Its Origin to Modern Times

---

THE BEAVER CLUB 55
Some Social Aspects of the Fur Trade

A DREAM OF EMPIRE 95
The Adventures of Tonty in Old Louisiana

The Masters of the Wilderness

A STUDY OF
THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY
FROM ITS ORIGIN TO
MODERN TIMES

"I am the land that listens, I am the land that broods;
Steeped in eternal beauty, crystalline waters and woods.
Long have I waited lonely, shunned as a thing accurst,
Monstrous, moody, pathetic, the last of the lands and the first;
Visioning camp-fires at twilight, sad with a longing forlorn,
Feeling my womb o'er-pregnant with the seed of cities unborn.
Wild and wide are my borders, stern as death is my sway,
And I wait for the men who will win me—and I will not be won in a day."

—Service, "The Law of the Yukon."

The Masters of the Wilderness*

The question of a Northwest Passage to India and the South Seas has stimulated the mind and kindled the imagination of mankind for four hundred years. From the very first a fascinating theory, it soon became a necessary obsession, for the fierce activities of the triumphant Turks rendered the usual routes to the Indies too perilous for commerce, and Christian nations, especially Holland and England, turned with intense eagerness to the solution of this problem. Defeated in the immediate object, their efforts nevertheless exercised an incalculable influence over the entire world. With the single exception of the cognate adventure, the search for the North Pole, it is probable that no other quest has added so immensely to those arts and industries which make for the promotion of science and the advancement of civilization. That such a passage actually existed has been recognized since the voyage of Sir Edward Parry in 1820 and the fact was confirmed by the expedition of McClure in 1857, yet the complete passage from sea to sea had never succeeded until the recent memorable voyage of Captain Amundsen in 1903–6. Among the earlier navigators who received the crown of immortality through their efforts to achieve this quest, none is more meritoriously conspicuous than Henry Hudson,

*A paper read before the Society, March 16, 1909.

who in 1607 hammered his way through the ice floes to 80° north latitude. Next he thought to break through on the south, and in 1609 he discovered and explored the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, the harbor of New York, where he was attacked by natives, and sailed up the Hudson River as far as the present site of Albany. But the lure of the Northern route was strong upon him, and in 1610 he undertook the voyage which was at the same time the source of his greatest renown and the cause of his dreary death.

Passing through Hudson Straits, he entered the Bay which also bears his name and guided his ship cautiously southward. Sustained by an indomitable spirit, he rose superior to many difficulties and dangers, and spent over a year exploring the harbors, inlets, and adjacent coasts of this great inland sea. On attempting the homeward passage, however, he found he had delayed too long, and his crew, already disaffected by reason of the long voyage and the many strange hardships, suddenly became enraged at Hudson on account of his irascible temper, and rose in mutiny on June 11, 1611. They put Hudson, his little son, and five others into a shallop with a small amount of ammunition and provisions and sailed away.

In the narrative of this expedition written by Abaccus Prickett, one of the mutineers who succeeded in reaching England after a wearisome and perilous voyage, it is told how the old

man, with set features and flying gray locks, grimly made sail in pursuit of his ship until he was dropped below the horizon and never seen again.

We now know only too well the barriers which lie in the path of the Northwest Passage. Almost directly northeast of the mouth of the Fish River which Lieutenants Back and Simpson both found, there lies a vast mass of ice which can neither move toward Behring Strait on account of the shallow water, nor to Baffin Bay on account of the narrowness and crookedness of the channels. We know also, from the reports of the Low expedition of 1903–4, that there are two open currents always flowing in the straits that lead to Hudson Bay; one along the northern shore inward and to the west, and one along the southern shore outward and eastward, bearing the raft ice of the Bay. These currents are so suitably disposed that by a slight change of course ships can navigate the straits and have the benefit of the current in either direction and sail with the ice floes rather than against them. We also know that Hudson Bay is simply a vast whirlpool 800 miles wide by 1,000 miles long which has been cut, grooved, and gouged out of the solid rock by those two powerful currents which bear in their puissant grasp the raft ice of the Arctic Sea, the ice of prehistoric ages.

Like a giant sand-blast these huge masses of ice have been whirled grinding and eroding

around the Bay only to be disgorged through Hudson Straits upon the bosom of the broad Atlantic. Into this channel of rock, the Hudson Straits, 450 miles long, is jammed from the west, churned together and concentrated the area of an ice continent, and up this channel from the east runs a "tide-rip" thirty-five feet high. When the "tide-rip" and the ice meet there occurs what the old navigators of the Hudson's Bay Company called "the furious overfall."

With difficulty one resists the temptation to pursue this interesting subject farther, but this is not the story that we started to relate, it is merely the scene of its beginning.

Impressed by the reports which various navigators brought back from this region, a company was formed for the purpose of exploiting the shores of the Bay and the wooded fastnesses of the interior. The company was organized originally at the instance of the French explorers, Radisson and his brother-in-law, Groseilliers, whose visit to the Hudson Bay country had revealed its boundless possibilities. Disappointed in enlisting an interest in the venture in Montreal, they applied to Sir George Carteret, who was then in America as a member of the Royal Commission appointed to settle a number of disputed questions between New York and New England.

It was through his influence that they met the King in 1666, but it was only after a long

delay, and some say not without insistence on the part of Louise Querouaille, the King's mistress, who was also under deep obligations to Lord Arlington, that the charter was granted by Charles II in May, 1670. Quite early in the venture the promoters had obtained audience with Prince Rupert, who with historical fieriness entered enthusiastically into the undertaking and became the first Governor of the "Honorable Hudson's Bay Company." There is an uncontradicted story to the effect that the Prince received a lump sum of £10,000 for his interest and influence in securing the charter, but we much prefer to believe that his interest was engaged and his romantic mind inflamed by the adventurous nature of the project, rather than by monetary considerations. When the Prince died he was succeeded in the governorship by the Duke of York, the King's brother, who afterward resigned to become James II of England. The Duke indeed had been associated with the adventure from the beginning and the records show that his was the first name on the stock book, while opposite the name on the credit side of the account it states: "By a share presented to him in the stock and adventure by the Governor and Company, £300." We learn that among the many subscribers to the stock were to be found the King's cousin, his brother, afterward King James, the Duke of Albemarle, General Monk, who was largely

responsible for the restoration of Charles, Henry, Earl of Arlington, a member of the ruling cabal, and Anthony, Earl of Shaftsbury, the versatile minister of the King, all of whom became directors in the new undertaking.

In their application for a charter the Company had urged the desirability of such a corporation as they contemplated as a means of (1) continuing the search for the Northwest Passage, (2) that in the progress of trade with the nations the blessings of civilization and religion should be brought to the Indians, and finally (3) that settlements could be affected to the glory of the King. We shall learn in the course of the narrative how quickly the Company lost sight of these high aims in the pursuit of a less noble purpose. The right of the King to grant such an instrument may be seriously questioned, but there was apparently no doubt in his own mind, and without evident qualms of conscience the "Merry Monarch" disposed of an expanse equal to the United States, except Alaska, "To our dear and entirely beloved cousin Prince Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine, Duke of Bavaria, etc. (with the others), constituting the Governor and Company of Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay." The charter states that the incorporators deserve the privileges because they "have at their own great cost and charges undertaken an expedition for Hudson's Bay in the northwest parts of America, for a discovery of a new

passage into the South Sea and for the finding of some trade for furs, minerals and other considerable commodities and by such their undertakings, have already made such discoveries as to encourage them to proceed farther in pursuance of their said design, by means whereof there may probably arise great advantage to us and our kingdom."

With truly royal, if unconscious, generosity Charles gives "The whole trade of all those seas, streights and bays, rivers, lakes, creeks and sounds, in whatsoever latitude they shall lie within the entrance of the streights commonly called Hudson's Streights, together with all the lands, countries and territories upon the coasts and confines of the seas, streights, bays, lakes and rivers, creeks and sounds aforesaid which are not now actually possessed by any of our subjects, *or by the subjects of any other Christian Prince or State.*"

Now the country watered by rivers flowing into Hudson Bay extended two hundred miles to the east, three hundred miles to the south, and sixteen hundred miles to the west, although by the terms of the charter it might extend to China as men at that time undoubtedly believed. From near the western end of Lake Superior, streams find their way by Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods to Lake Winnipeg and thence by Nelson River to Hudson Bay. From southwestern Minnesota the "Red River of the North" flows into Lake

Winnipeg and thence into Hudson Bay. Hither also flows the mighty Saskatchewan, which, wide as the Mississippi, draws out its lingering and serpentine course for sixteen hundred miles from its origin in the very heart of the Rocky Mountains to that huge collecting basin, Lake Winnipeg, where its turbulent flood first finds temporary peace. This vast extent of territory was quite commensurate with the powers and privileges conferred, for the charter also reads that the "fisheries within Hudson's Streights, the minerals including gold, silver, gems and precious stones, shall be possessed by the Company." The whole land was to be held in "free and common socage," that is, as absolute proprietors. The Company was empowered to make laws not only for its own servants, but having force over all persons upon the lands. And further, "To judge all persons belonging to said Governor or Company, or that shall live under them, in all cases civil or criminal according to the laws of this kingdom and to execute justice accordingly."

"The Company is empowered to send ships of war, men or ammunition into their plantations and appoint commanders and officers and even to issue to them their commissions."

To make peace or war with any non-Christian people.

To build forts and fortifications and, what was more to the point, they were to have "the whole and only liberty of Trade and Traffick,"

and free power was given to seize upon the persons of all who might attempt to violate this provision.

This, then, was the origin of that famous Company which for two hundred years held lordly sway over the "wintry lakes and boundless forests of the Canadas, exercising a power more absolute, if possible, than that of the potentates of the East India Company over the voluptuous climes and magnificent realms of the Orient."

It will be interesting now to consider briefly how rightfully Charles indulged his kingly bounty. The bestowal of such great privileges as those given to the Hudson's Bay Company may be accounted for in the prevailing idea as to the royal prerogative, but even in those days the grant was attacked and called invalid since it had not received the sanction of Parliament. A most troublesome feature of the charter was the exclusion of the "portion possessed by subjects of any other Christian Prince or State."

At that time Canada was undeniably French and there was no distinct boundary drawn between the territory of France on the south and that granted to the English Company on the Bay, but in the contemporaneous maps acknowledged as correct by both nations, the Saskatchewan and Red Rivers were alike recognized as belonging to France, though both drained into Hudson Bay. By the eighth article of the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, the

whole of Hudson Bay, excepting only Fort Albany, was recognized as belonging to the Crown of France. The Company already somewhat uncertain as to its rights did not feel easier under the terms of the treaty and considerable anxiety was produced by the continual attacks of the French upon the Company's forts, which had been so far successful as almost to dispossess the English. In the same year that this treaty had been signed and by the terms of which each side was to keep what each then occupied, the indefatigable Iberville had conducted an expedition into the Bay, and secured possession of all the forts including even the long defiant Nelson (or York) after a brilliant naval engagement. But in spite of the attacks by Iberville and others, in spite of the capture and demolition of its forts, the Company held grimly to its privileges which every year of possession bound closer.

For the first time in 1713 by the treaty of Utrecht was a portion of the shores of the Bay ceded to England. Thus forty-three years after the granting of the charter and twenty-eight years after the death of the grantor, could the English claim undisputed possession of a *part* of Hudson Bay, and then only was such a grant legally possible which Charles had made to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670.

Throughout it all, however, the disastrous results of actual and of threatened treaty action never betrayed the dignity of the direct-

orate into clamor nor unseemly lamentation. Delegation after delegation, to be sure, besought and frequently received the benefit of royal influence and protection in the early history of the adventure, while in later times the best counselors of the United Kingdom fought its legal battles in court, parliament, and forum, but from first to last the inner workings of the Company were consistently and carefully veiled in obscurity.

The meeting of the directors in the old Hudson Bay House on Fenchurch Street, London, were invariably conducted with the utmost secrecy and ceremony. The officers arrived and departed like conspirators and held their sessions in the semi-gloom which the few scattered candles could only accentuate. The solemnity and secrecy of these occasions was such that, as might be expected, Dame Rumor was soon busily spreading exaggerated and fanciful reports of the unknown events which took place behind the closed doors. These reports delivered in mysterious whispers and accompanied by significant shrugs of the shoulders generally referred to the enormous financial success of the adventure. Doubtless much of the secrecy was due to the weight of the responsibility which each of the directors felt in the gigantic undertaking, but also it was wise business policy.

Let us now look forward for a moment to a consideration of the results of the enterprise

and learn if possible *why* the Company should maintain a dense cloud over its American dominions, and *why* any attempt to disperse the cloud and allow light to fall upon the mystery beneath should be met with serious obstacles and not infrequently with death. Let us take advantage of our privilege as narrators and peer for an instant through the obscurity which has hidden, as much as may be, the financial operations of this Company which have been conducted so quietly and shrewdly for two hundred and forty years.

The Company was originally capitalized for £10,500, and on this amount it admittedly earned 125 per cent in the next twenty years; in 1690 the stock was trebled, and thirty years later the directors were startled out of their habitual calm and caution by the general excitement attending the South Sea Bubble and the stock was again trebled; that this was not, however, an example of high finance is shown by the fact that they paid a 25 per cent dividend on the trebled stock in the same year. From 1690 to 1800, a period of 110 years, the stock earned, according to the admission of Governor Pelly before a Legislative committee, from 60 per cent to 70 per cent a year, the stock being again trebled during this period and an increase of £9,450 added to the trebled amount. When we consider that these figures have been yielded up under extreme pressure by parties interested in their concealment, it is

not probable that they are in any degree overstated, but rather the contrary.

According to Beckles Wilson, the value of the merchandise sent to the Bay in 1676 was £650 sterling, while the furs brought back sold for £19,000, a profit of nearly 3,000 per cent. In 1748 the value of goods sent out amounted to £5,000 sterling, and the furs received in exchange sold in England for £30,000 or 600 per cent profit; the profit in dull times according to the same authority being 40 per cent on a paid-up capital. From 1800 to 1821, owing to the competition of other companies, especially of its energetic and aggressive rival, the Northwest Company, the stock paid a trivial 4 per cent for sixteen years and nothing at all for five years. This was the period, however, in which the Company, constantly harried by its unrelenting opponent, expanded most broadly. It broke away from its traditional policy of keeping forts in the vicinity of the Great Bay only, and threw out a network of posts, that covered every important point on the principal trails and water courses of the Northwest.

In 1821 the Northwest Company was merged into the Hudson's Bay Company, and upon the new and enlarged capital of £400,000 they received an annual profit of £250,000.

With this knowledge we cannot wonder that the directors came and went with the stealthiness of thieves, nor that they resented the

attempts that were continually made to penetrate the gloom and obscurity in which they had carefully enveloped their activities in the adventurous, lawless, and fascinating fur trade.

The executive staff of the Company, elected by the stockholders, consisted of the governor and seven directors, who ruled with an imperious hand over their more than kingly domain. They controlled the annual fur sales and apportioned the dividends, they established forts and appointed and removed governors, they made war and peace not only with "non-Christian people," as provided in the charter, but with their at least equally Christian competitors. They purchased ships and sent them laden with supplies annually to the shores of the Bay whence the cargoes were distributed to the interior.

Neither friend nor enemy succeeded in disturbing or altering their authority. Under their jealous eyes every detail of the adventure was industriously worked out.

The chief factors were directly responsible to the board, and were frequently ordered before it to explain or justify their actions and to receive the discipline which the board was not backward in applying. A most servile obedience was exacted at all times. The factors in turn were not unready to hand down the law with undiminished force to the Company's servants, both within and without the fort. Dependent as they were for supplies upon the

annual ship and exposed in the interval to manifold dangers, the little isolated garrisons were expected to possess a high degree of individual responsibility, together with a loyal subordination to the lawful head of the post. In each fort the ranks were kept with almost military precision from governor or chief factor through chief trader, clerk, apprentice clerk, postmaster and interpreters to laborers and Indians. The apprentice clerks were engaged for a period of five years, which promised in from fifteen to twenty years to bring the apprentice to a clerkship with the munificent income of $200 per year. The first five years were invariably spent at a remote and desolate post where, cut off from home or kindred, he learned to look to the Company as a dog to his master. He thus became bound to the Company for life, since other avenues of business were effectually closed to him, and progress was possible only along the line of Company promotion, which involved a lifetime. He embarked upon a career in which his position was as definitely ordained, his course as perfectly controlled and his escape as improbable as if he belonged to a sodality of feudal knights or had membership in a religious brotherhood. The personnel of the forts was recruited almost entirely from the Highlands of Scotland and the Orkney Isles, and therein the Company showed great business acumen, since by nature, education, and early environment they

possessed the taciturnity, the thrift, the love for solitude and wildness, the simplicity and sturdiness of character which eminently fitted them for the arduous and lonesome life which they were called upon to endure. They dwelt in the grim and grinding wilderness inhabited by savage beasts and still more savage men, and against such adversaries they were expected to hazard their lives in ceaseless warfare to wring out profits for the Company. As they were liable to be sent at a moment's notice from the Atlantic to the Pacific, they were expected to be self-reliant and resolute in the presence of danger to themselves or to the property in their charge and keep friendly with a notoriously uncertain and childish people. The spirit of monopoly, the golden character of silence, the need of being secretive and uncommunicative, was instilled into every clerk, trapper, and trader. At length after thirty-five or forty years of faithful service, the clerk became a factor, and as factor he secured command of a post, be it on the Arctic shore, on the plains of Assiniboia, or beside a rushing stream that forms a highway to the St. Lawrence, to the Pacific or to Hudson Bay; the command was his and he ruled like a proconsul over an immense territory interlaced with trails and waterways and inhabited by barbarous tribes. Surrounded by his Indian vassalage, and in the company of one or two white men, the factor lived his life until such time as his

length of service permitted him to retire on a pension and return to his native land.

On a little knoll, a hundred yards or so from the water, stands the factor's house, and arranged in the form of a square are the other buildings of the post, consisting of the general store, the warehouse, the blacksmith shop, the canoe house, and the carpenter shop, all of which in the olden time were surrounded by high, pointed and not-easily-to-be-scaled palisades, dominated by a great flagstaff in the midst of the square, from the top of which for honored guest or festal day the banner of the Company waved its lazy folds over a strange and heterogeneous population. The close relationship of the Crown and Company was shown on the crimson field where the Union Jack and the initials of the great company occupy adjoining but diagonal quadrants.

The life at the forts became a routine like a frontier army post. In winter snowshoeing, trapping, and hunting could be made incidental to supplying the factory with fresh meat, while the evenings were spent in chess, backgammon, and whist when players enough could be obtained. In summer canoe sailing and dog racing were cherished sports, but the great event of the year was the arrival or departure of the brigade. This was the fleet of three or four "North-canoes," each manned by eight men and all under the guidance of a conductor. The brigades took out the fur from

the fort and brought back supplies from the coast, a journey that sometimes required two years for its completion. The "North-canoes" had skilful men in bow and stern at double the wages of the rest, who were responsible for the canoe and its contents to the conductor of the brigade, or to the head of the expedition, when two or more brigades traveled in company. The freight of these canoes would consist of sixty pieces or packages of merchandise weighing from 90 to 100 pounds each, together with provisions to the amount of 1,000 pounds. Added to this was the weight of eight men and the 40 pounds of "duffle" or personal baggage which each was allowed to carry, and the whole weight would, therefore, exceed 8,000 pounds, or possibly four tons as an average. When the brigade arrived or departed all was excitement, since it brought the isolated post into touch with the great world without and would bring back from the coast a fund of new experiences for winter's consumption. Sometimes on the return of the brigade there would be found a file of newspapers a year old, and these would be opened day by day on the corresponding date and the world's news of the previous year eagerly followed. Thus each lonely post constituted an oasis of civilization in the midst of the wilderness, a peripheral ganglion in more or less close communication with the central nervous system.

That the mind was not always satisfied nor

the emotions benumbed by this primitive existence to the degree desired by the Company, and that the factor many times repented his contract, may be learned from the story of McLean, who was forty years in the service; he says:

"The history of my career may serve as a warning to those who may be disposed to enter the Hudson Bay Company's service. They may learn that from the moment they embark in the Company's canoes at Lachine or in their ships at Gravesend, they bid adieu to all that civilized man most values on earth. They bid adieu to their families and friends, probably forever, for if they remain long enough to attain the promotion that allows them the privilege of revisiting their native land (twenty or twenty-five years), what changes does not this life exhibit in a much shorter time? They bid adieu to all the comforts and conveniences of civilization to vegetate at some solitary post, hundreds of miles perhaps from any other human habitation, save the wigwam of the savage, without any society other than that of their own thoughts or of the two or three humble persons who share their exile. They bid adieu to all refinement and cultivation, not infrequently becoming semi-barbarians, so altered in habits and sentiments, that they not only become attached to savage life, but lose all relish for any other." Thus the white man.

The reaction of the Indian to his environment is no less interesting than its effect upon the Anglo-Saxon. In each race special qualities were developed according to the needs of the Company.

The tradition of the Company was to keep the Indian a hunter. There was never any effort wasted in encouraging the native to agriculture or any industry. Tribal strife also was frowned upon, since it prevented hunting and trapping and therefore interfered with the interests of the Company, and no Indian uprising has ever marred the long suzerainty. "To make a good collection of fur was the chief aim; for this the Indian required no education, for this the wandering habit needed to be cultivated rather than discouraged, and for this it was well to have the home ties as brittle as possible, hence the teepee and the tent were favored for the Indian hunter rather than the permanent camp or the log house." Originally of a more pacific and docile nature than the fierce tribes farther south, they soon lost their initiative and became employees and dependents of the Company.

To stand well with the Company became not only a desirable thing among the natives, on account of the rewards it produced, but it became essential to the preservation of life, for the old arts were forgotten in the use of the new facilities furnished by the post. The system worked admirably. The hunter was given

credit by the factor for about $150.00 worth of goods, and woe betide him if he did not return at the end of the season with fur enough to cancel the indebtedness. In case of accident or a run of hard luck, provided he bore a good reputation, he would be staked again, but otherwise he could secure no more supplies until his obligation had been taken up or vouched for by some compassionate relative; neither would it avail to go to another post, for he would find his reputation there ahead of him.

Occasionally an Indian vassal feels that he has been unjustly treated, and filled with his sense of injury, he will march off indignantly at the head of his family and attach himself to an adjacent post, hoping thereby to injure his former factor. In the great Northland all roads that carry furs lead to Hudson Bay, so that from the Company's standpoint the Indian is welcome to live near any post, provided only that he brings in *fur*. When the furs are in the hands of the Indian, the Company will do the rest. The great seal of the Company bears the motto *pro pelle cutem*, or "skin for skin," a phrase which has been variously interpreted by those most interested.

The price charged the Indians for goods has always been as large as the amount paid for furs has been small, but this is the rule always where, with ostentatious righteousness, the white man takes up his burden at the expense of the unwilling native, or in the guise of trade

with the ignorant or dependent tribes whom he benevolently chooses to civilize.

Having secured his goods, mended the canoes, and bidden farewell to his friends, the Indian starts with his family in the late fall for the hunting-grounds. "Day after day they labor with paddle or tracking line, pole or tumpstrap, or occasionally spreading their blankets as sails to a favorable breeze. They live on the country through which they travel, snow flurries come and go, ice forms and thaws, dry leaves rustle upon the floor of the forest. The weather is cold and exhilarating, days of glorious sunshine and nights of hard frost." Their way takes them over portages that lead across steep and rocky hills, through wild gorges and over rank muskegs. Along beautiful little streams and tranquil lakes they drive their canoes swiftly to the rhythm of paddle handles bumping on the gunwales and to the music of blades that swish through swirling waters, leaving little gurgling wakes. They glide on beneath overhanging trees, past a moose-trodden beach or a bear-trampled bank. Down wild rapids, across foaming eddies, through endless forests of conifer and birch they sweep with the current as through a canyon deeply carved of malachite and marble. Through this enchanting panorama they speed to the end of their voyage; doubtless to a point where a little river breaks the shore of a lonely lake, where furtive shapes steal silently to

drink and phantom hunters roam in birch and cedar solitudes. Here with long spruce saplings they frame the winter home, covering the naked poles with birch bark or animal skins, and warming the tepee, as it is now called, by means of a little conical fire within. The grim Northland winter is spent in hunting, trapping, and curing the skins, until the groans of the ice-covered streams and the lisp of the snow-mantled firs inform the hunter that spring is at hand and the way to the post open. In response to these airy summons the canoes are loaded down with the pelts of beaver and bear, lynx and marten, and other denizens of the wilderness; the covering is removed from the tepee, the spruce poles are left standing like a naked skeleton, and are quickly lost to view as the Indian swings into the icy stream and starts back to the post. When the season has been good and the hunter fortunate, he will bring in from $300 to $600 worth of furs, and he feels more than ever the magic of spring as he paddles lightheartedly down the river to his summer camp.

The method of trade with the Indians was developed as early as 1690 and quickly became a science. The tribes brought down their skins to the post and delivered them through a small aperture in the side of the storehouse. They entered the stockade three or four at a time and traded one by one at the window over which the chief trader presided. The actual

dealing with the natives was restricted to the two officials known as traders, and none of the Company's other servants was permitted to deal with them except on rare occasions. The trade was necessarily carried on mostly during the summer when the rivers were free from ice, but sometimes when the hunting-ground was near, the Indians would come in during the winter with snowshoes and dog sleds. When the Indian was dissatisfied with the price offered for his furs, they were passed back to him. No compulsion ostensibly was employed; he might either keep his skins or starve, for the trader knew that the struggles of the Indian were in vain, and like a charmed bird he must ultimately drop into the always open maw of the Company.

The furs were weighed on a long-armed balance, such as even yet may be seen at the Astor House at Mackinac by those who visit the Old Post. The visitor there may also see an old iron press which was used in binding down the pelts into packs of 40 to 100 pounds each, for convenient management in the brigades of canoes which once a year carried to the coast the spoil of the forests and the streams and returned laden with supplies from the ships.

The Indian received a wooden peg for each "castor" in value of his winter catch—the "castor" or "made beaver" being the medium of exchange and valued at one to two shillings

per pound. The beaver, which was most sought for originally, is now almost as extinct as the buffalo, and its place has been taken by the marten.

The thought instinctively arises that the Company took a great risk in thus trusting the native sense of honor in giving credit for the year's supplies, but it was very rare for the Indian to fail to appear, and only did he fail when very unusual obstacles were encountered. When he did not return to the post, but disposed of his furs to the free trader or a rival company, a detail of two or three of his tribe were sent after him with instructions not to return without bringing him back for judgment. Eight months or a year might possibly elapse before he was traced to his remote retreat in the bush, but eventually he or his scalp was surely brought in by his haggard and wayworn captors.

The Indians, always the most numerous of the Company's servants, lost much of their importance in course of time. The employees of the Company were originally Indians and Highland Scotch, but lured by the love of adventure and the "bright face of danger," gradually there crept in from the south the *voyageurs*, *coureurs de bois*, and half-breeds from the French settlements in Lower Canada, who took to the wild life with the utmost avidity and combined the skill and woodcraft of the Indian with the happy, dash-

ing, and debonair ways of the French. The "half-breeds" constitute at present a very important part of the Canadian population and deserve some reference to their origin.

From the very first it had been customary among the English employees, and is yet for that matter, to take what was called a "country wife" from among the tribes around the fort, and when the trader left the country he always made provision for the support of his "country wife" and the invariably numerous family. These marriages between the whites and the natives were so common and so fruitful that sometimes in later years the entire summer population around the fort could with difficulty show a single full-blood Indian, and some entire tribes at present can show no single individual of pure descent.

There is an account in Irving's *Astoria* of one of these marriages where the diplomatic McDougall, a chief factor, thinking to improve his business by means of an Indian alliance, conceived the idea of seeking the hand of a native princess, the daughter of the one-eye Comcomly who held sway over the fishing tribe of the Chinooks. "By conference after conference and multiple negotiations the preliminaries were at length settled and the chief promised to bring to the fort his daughter, who is represented as having one of the flattest and most aristocratic heads in the tribe. The worthy sachem landed in princely style,

arrayed in a bright blue blanket and a red breech clout, with an extra quantity of paint and feathers, and attended by a train of half-naked warriors and nobles. A horse was in waiting for the princess, and mounting her behind one of the clerks she was conveyed, coy but compliant, to the fortress, where she was received with devout, though decent, joy by her expectant bridegroom. Her bridal adornments, it is true, at first caused some little dismay, for she had painted and anointed herself for the occasion according to the Chinook custom. However, by generous use of soap and water, she was freed from all adventitious tint and fragrance and entered into the nuptial state the cleanest princess that had ever been known among the somewhat unctuous tribe of the Chinooks."

When a particularly punctilious factor could not bring himself to consider a native marriage in this fashion and his long absence from home had obliterated the memory of his earlier sweethearts, he took refuge in that ever-present caterer to all the necessities of life and ordered a wife from the Company with less concern than he would order a new axe. In one instance the safe arrival of the wife thus ordered was acknowledged as follows: "Received, one wife in fair condition; hope she will prove good, though she is certainly a rum one to look at."

The usual method of securing a wife was much more summary and far less ceremonious.

A few insignificant presents were given in exchange and the native parent at once became the proud and morganatic father-in-law. As a result of this custom the number of half-breeds, both French and English, rapidly increased. These people possessed the fierceness of their Indian mothers, together with the high intelligence and capacity for affairs of their white sires and for many years worked admirably into the pattern of the Company. Eventually however they wearied of the exactions and impositions, and in a later movement of this drama we shall meet them again burning with indignation against the Company. The Indians in the meantime were subjected for decade after decade to unceasing pressure and discipline that gradually weeded out the old ideas and habits. The characters that would not mold went down and a distinctive individual grew up that was known as the "Hudson Bay Indian," an individual that possessed, in a remarkable degree, the highly essential quality of woodcraft, together with a docility, a reliability, and a sense of duty that made him absolutely irreplaceable.

Until the arrival of the missionary, the trend of Indian character was quite steadily upward in all those qualities that make him a steady and efficient fur collector. Considering the conditions and the general attitude of the Company, it is hardly surprising that, in spite of the terms of the charter, so many difficulties were

placed in the way of the missionary, whom pressure from home eventually compelled the Company to receive. This opposition to the missionaries is said to have inspired the remark that the initials H.B.C., that appear in the lower and outer quarter of the far-flung banner of the Company, should signify "Here before Christ."

It has been claimed since, as a proof of their Christian character, that the Indians rarely murder, and that large crimes are uncommon, but so it was, except in warfare, before the missionary arrived, and since then the Indian, sure of absolution, has become a sneak and a hypocrite, and does not hesitate to commit theft and many other small crimes. The effect produced by two missions, such as the Catholic Church and Church of England, when they were located at the same post, was always subversive.

The missionaries at any rate have always earnestly and unitedly opposed the use of whisky in the fur trade. The Company also denounced the custom in public with much noise, but secretly it connived at the distribution of whisky by its servants. This fact is frankly admitted by every chief factor who has left records of his stewardship. It certainly was freely used during the great rivalry of the companies, and it is quite believable that earlier and even in later times these shrewd traders never lost a pelt for lack of a drink of

whisky. It is largely true at present that the Indian cannot obtain whisky from the posts, and while this is pointed out as a virtue, it may be added that in this respect the Company is only obeying a stringent law of the Dominion which forbids the sale of liquor by anybody to the Indians. Neither the missionary nor the Company ever in any degree influenced the Indian in this respect; the only way to secure abstinence was the total deprivation which the Dominion enforced. The missionary work has progressed quite rapidly since 1850, and now the natives about Hudson Bay, Lake Winnipeg, on the Mackenzie River, throughout British Columbia, and on the great savannahs of Assiniboia are largely Christianized. The missionaries also, as the Company feared, became a means for the distribution of information from the interior. With the knowledge of the abundant returns that anyone could secure in the fur trade, it is not surprising that opposition to the grasping monopoly should arise and many, either as individuals or as companies, attempted to share in the rich spoil of the Hudson Bay Territory.

Bryce states that there are frequent allusions in the minutes of the Company, during the first fifty years of its existence, to the arrest and punishment even of servants and employees who secreted valuable furs on their homeward voyage for the purpose of disposing of them.

Until the last thirty-five years, moreover, the Company maintained its privileges, with the greatest firmness and success. For over a hundred years from its origin, that is, until the formation of the Northwest Company, no rivalry worthy of the name arose to cause annoyance, and in consequence the forts still remained in close proximity to Hudson Bay, to which the natives for hundreds of miles east, west, north, and south would repair for trade. Ship after ship laden with priceless furs drove steadily eastward, and from the public sales a golden stream flowed steadily into the coffers of the Company. We can easily imagine the great concern of the stockholders in the olden days upon the arrival at Gravesend of the annual packet, freighted with fruits of the adventure, and the pleasant reaction when the treasure was removed from the great hold of the ship, and piled high in the spacious warehouses of the Company, there to await a favorable time for sale at public auction. It was at Gravesend, also, that the outward-bound ships were piled deep with muzzle-loading fowling-pieces and ammunition, with brass kettles, knives, hatchets, tobacco, glass beads, flints, mirrors, and red lead, and thence they sailed regularly, about the first of June, and were not heard from again until October.

When the ships arrived at the bay, the forts were visited in turn, their stores replenished, and their furs taken on board. Each fort was

charged with the goods delivered and credited with commodities returned, all in "castors" or "made beaver" skins. For many years, this simple method was sufficient, but when competition arose and the forts spread to the heads of the rivers, to the interior, and to the passes in the mountains, it became necessary to make up the supplies for the different forts and send them by paddle and portage to the many dependent posts, hundreds or even thousands of miles in the "hinterland," and the discipline of the Company was so excellent and so exacting that to this day the evidence of a successful trip in the great Canadian wilderness in the mind of the Indian guide is when he can say to his employer that the journey has been made "without breaking a canoe or losing a pack."

Besides preserving in the utmost secrecy the true nature of its possessions, the Company actively proclaimed the adverse and repellent story that the entire domain was a vast and desolate waste frozen by the icy blasts of winter, covered by snow, devoid of food and shelter, forbidding in aspect, the soil rocky and sterile, and inhabited only by ferocious beasts and not less savage Indians. Everywhere are found allusions to the dreadful dangers and hazards to life which the traveler encounters who ventures into this menacing domain. Traveling was made difficult, and the presence of strangers was a source of irritation and resentment. The "free trader," that knight-

errant of the forests, was constantly exposed to the Company's displeasure, for trading in the territory as we have seen was absolutely forbidden, and the "free trader" intercepted the natives on the journey to the fort and secured the precious furs. Many devices were employed to deter, circumvent, or destroy him. By one method a couple of Indians were put upon his trail to keep him moving and to warn off the natives from commerce with him. They interfered with his food supply, broke his traps, crept up and destroyed his snowshoes, and stole or killed his sled dogs. In the end he left the country, or starved, resistance being immediately fatal. Or, again, he was captured and brought to the post, and compelled to promise to leave the country forever, his return being equivalent to a death sentence. Occasionally, he would be conveyed fifty or a hundred miles from the post under guard and then released with a few ounces of pemmican, his gun, and two loads of ammunition. Thus "without the shedding of blood" many a trader has been sent on *la longue traverse*, as it was named, but few ever lived to reach the settlement. When persistent, the "free trader" never returned to his home, and later his bones might be found whitening near the site of his little camp. Accidents are sudden, fatalities are not investigated, and death ever stalks in the wake of adventure. Many might suspect, but

none ever knew what mysterious agency had caused his death.

But the methods employed against "free traders" singly were powerless against them in combination.

Far to the south, where the mighty St. Lawrence boils in fury among the sunken rocks, the city of Montreal was slowly assuming a dominant place, and from this stronghold in the south an aggressive and persistent foe began to percolate through the rivers, lakes, and meandering streams and through the pathless forests, to demand battle from these "Lords of the North." Duluth had explored the north shore of Lake Superior and traded with the Indians around Lake Nepigon. Verandrye, and his sons, still in search of the elusive Northwest Passage, this time by way of the Great Lakes, had pushed up through the Rainy Lake and River, to Lake of the Woods and thence on to Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan, their hearts beating high with hope as expanse after expanse of water stretched out before them until they faced defeat and death at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

With the capture of Quebec by Wolfe in 1759 the English were left in sole and undisputed possession of the North country, and first Alexander Henry and afterward Finlay began to trade in the Lake Superior region. Following them came Frobisher, Cadot, Pangman, McTavish, Mackenzie, and other "free

traders," who a few years after (1783–84) combined their efforts under the name of the Northwest Company with headquarters at Montreal. With the appearance of this determined foe, an astonishing activity began in exploration and in opening up new avenues for trade. Except for the ill-fated voyage of the "Albany" and the "Discovery" shortly after the granting of the charter, no attempt had been made by the Company to discover the Northwest Passage according to the terms of the grant, until, goaded and shamed by enemies at home, the notable expedition of Hearne was sent out in 1769, resulting in the discovery and survey of the Coppermine River.

In 1789, five years after the formation of the Northwest Company, Mackenzie, one of the enterprising partners, pushed north from the "Northwester's" fort on Lake Atabasca, entered Great Bear Lake, and thence passed down to the Arctic Ocean by the river which now bears his name.

The old Company was then in a position where surrender or war to the knife were the only alternatives. It chose the latter, and stretching out its arms from the forts on Hudson Bay, it began to parallel the aggressive actions of the Northwest Company and planted fort after fort along the great trails and-water highways of the vast interior, from the Frozen Ocean to the sources of the Mississippi and from Hudson Bay to the waters of

the Western Sea. Many bloody battles were fought between the employees of the rival companies, whose forts frequently were located not more than two hundred yards apart. Meanwhile in England the officers of the Company, whom Lord Bolingbroke, pestered to madness, had called the "smug and ancient gentlemen," brought every influence to bear at court to secure aid in the maintenance of the monopoly and assistance in preventing its infringement.

Spurred into action by the ceaseless activity and encroachment of its great rival, the Company now shook off the sloth of a hundred years, during which abundant dividends had checked the ambition and restrained the imagination of the men at the head of affairs, and for the first time made bold and vigorous war for the retention of its inheritance. The deeds of audacity and valor, of fortitude and unwearied endeavor which were performed by the rivals during the next thirty years will always live among the most thrilling adventures that ever graced the romantic and enthralling pages of history, and might well take rank with the strenuous deeds of the old Homeric era.

During this short period Mackenzie finally succeeded after incredible hardships in crossing the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific shore (1793). Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific by way of Columbia (1805). Simon Frazer

discovered and explored the river that bears his name and also reached the Pacific (1808). David Thompson, by way of the Saskatchewan and Columbia, and the Astorians, by the overland route, both reached the Pacific in the same year (1811). These hardy and adventurous spirits have all left chronicles of their exploits that are well worth perusal. Absorbing as fiction and fascinating by reason of the romantic associations, the career of each stands boldly forth and challenges our admiration as an epic of human endeavor.

Chains of forts were interwoven in a vast web across the face of the Northland, the game was wantonly destroyed, and only the Indians thrived while the giants cast dice with fate.

In 1816 the great rivals had absorbed or ruined eleven other partnerships and were themselves on the verge of destruction from the force and fury of their long and sanguinary battle. Affairs then culminated in the massacre of Governor Semple of the Hudson's Bay Company with twenty of his followers by the half-breeds and Indians in the service of the Northwest Company. This occurred at Seven Oaks in the midst of the harassed Red River settlement. Both companies recoiled in horror from this deed. Both now recognized that a treaty or compromise in some form was absolutely imperative. Happily a truce was arranged through the intervention of Hon. Edward Ellice, and then in 1821 the Northwest

Company was absorbed and the united interests were placed under the management of Governor Simpson, one of the great men of the Hudson's Bay Company. The old corporation again found itself in full and complete control. By this merger the Company was provided with a vastly increased number of men and forts and every facility for the pursuit of trade. By combining the influence of the old and new, they again secured legal recognition of their monopoly of the fur trade, not only over the region of Hudson Bay which they already owned, but also over the entire Pacific and Arctic watersheds.

A period of prosperity and romantic adventure followed. On the western shore of Lake Superior, thirty miles north of the international boundary line, was located Fort William, the principal post of the confederated companies, and every year the chief factors and chief traders from all the interior forts repaired thither to meet in general council the partners from Montreal. These expeditions were conducted with much ceremony and resembled the progress of a Highland chieftain with his numerous, if ragged, retinue.

No splendid ostentation was possible; no glitter and sheen save that of their weapons and paddles; no flaunting *guidon* save only the banner of the Company; no flourish of music save only the human voice signalized the rapid march of these dour potentates of the wilder-

ness. Yet even with scanty accessories the half-breeds and Indians through temperament and instinct were enabled to create a dashing and dramatic appearance.

Thus from the forts of the remote Pacific to the shores of Hudson Bay, from the eternal ice of the North, where the Dance of the Dead Men sheds a fitful light upon the long Arctic night, to the tumultuous floods of the St. Lawrence, brigades of canoes might be seen in the spring of the year converging toward the blue and icy waters of the Great Lake. The high spirits of the *voyageurs* kept the paddles flashing merrily, and while the forests resounded with such songs as "*Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre*" and "*A la claire fontaine*," the hardy canoe men would run the rapids or track the canoes up the swift waters.

With packs ranging from one hundred to three hundred pounds suspended by headstrap, or tumpline, they would run the portages with zeal and good-natured rivalry. With one hundred and fifty pounds they would traverse a nine-mile portage and return in six hours. When the brigades arrived within a few hours of a post they camped until early the following morning, and then dressing in their most picturesque apparel with gaudy feathers and ribbons streaming from caps and garters and singing their most rollicking song, they put the utmost vigor of their sinewy arms into the bending paddles and swept madly down upon

the post. They arrived at the landing with speed unchecked, and while the spectator held his breath in anticipation of seeing them dashed to pieces, the canoe in mid-career was brought to a full stop in the space of a few inches by a powerful and united back stroke. Here discipline was relaxed, drinking was the order of the day, and even the lordly partners, their business council concluded, entered upon such enthusiastic and uproarious revels that their occasional echoes still rebound from the cliffs and heights of Thunder Bay to far distant Montreal.

In considering the decline of the "Great Company," one has only to contemplate the slow decay of a romantic ideal fraught with high and adventurous possibilities and the ultimate lapse into a crass commercialism. In this chronicle there is no opportunity to exhibit magnificent buildings ornamented with a wealth of architecture nor innumerable armies winning great victories, neither gorgeous decorations nor oriental splendor, but the attention must be directed to a supreme creation of nature decorated with boundless forests and limitless plains, upon whose vast expanse mighty rivers and magnificent lakes have been poured with a prodigal hand and in whose very midst man, uninspired man, has toiled and moiled, has wrought and riven, and has done his deathless deeds in the solitude and in the silence, unheralded and unseen, in true heroic measure.

In the last chapter, it is necessary to trace the decline of the romance, the elision of the poetry, the removal of the glamor which the dauntless deeds of the woodsmen in their picturesque environment have hung like halos over the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company. To the illumined mind a dim and vapory nimbus still lingers hauntingly over these historic spots, but in the very fulness of fruition the disintegration of the Company's career was begun. For forty years it continued at the zenith of its glory, the woods were filled with the *voyageurs*, ships came and went bearing supplies and pelts, over 150,000 Indians spent their laborious lives in gleaning the wealth of the forests and streams, and over 3,000 employees took charge of the commodities from the sale of which over 60 per cent profit was annually distributed as dividends.

Vigilantly the governor kept watch and ward over its rights and privileges and the pressure exercised by his fine machiavellian fingers was felt by the American commissioners at every stage of the negotiation of the Oregon Treaty, which involved the forts on the Columbia River as well as the Island of Vancouver. The Canadian Pacific grant found secret but obstinate opposition from the same source. Meanwhile knowledge of the great wealth in the interior spread farther and farther, and more frequent and more determined attempts were made to penetrate the rigid barricade. More

numerous and more extensive breaches were made in the Company's defenses by rivals and free traders, but they were superficial and trivial. In the bold and aggressive exterior there was not the slightest sign to mark the real and vital danger which existed inside. For one hundred and fifty years the Company had successfully beaten off the only enemy capable of destroying its splendid organization. A change occurred; a strong man appeared with a fixed idea, the opposition was overcome, and the colonization long repelled was immediately inaugurated. One is not greatly astonished to learn that the man who innocently and benevolently produced the conditions that were to reduce the Company to an allotropic form was a man who stood high in the councils of the directory.

When the poor peasants were expelled from the Highland glens and crofts of Kildonan in order that the proprietors might secure game preserves, the philanthropic Earl of Selkirk, who owned nearly one-third of the stock of the Company, conceived the plan that these people might be transferred to the boundless plains of the fertile but undeveloped regions around Lake Winnipeg. Through his connection with the Company, he was able to purchase 110,000 square miles of land which surrounded the junction of the Assiniboia and Red Rivers. In 1811 his first colony of seventy people arrived in three vessels at Fort York, but so

late in the season that it was impossible to complete the journey. Wintering at Fort York, they started in the spring on their long and toilsome trip by river and portage, up rocky ascents, over perilous passes and across a 300-mile expanse of open lake, and at last arrived at their destination. This settlement they first named Fort Douglas, in honor of Selkirk, but after the massacre it was called Fort Garry, and later became the present city of Winnipeg.

The Company used this event in later years to prove that it favored colonization, but this was solely for argument, since it not only did not aid and was in no way responsible for the colonization, but consistently and steadfastly opposed the Selkirk settlement and continually placed obstacles in the way of its success.. The men at Fort Garry were joined by other colonists during the next three years, until they numbered two hundred and eighty. For fifteen years, however, it was an open question whether the colony would survive or perish.

Surrounded by Indians, wild beasts, and other strange dangers, combating extreme droughts and most unusual floods, intense heat and extreme cold, plagues of grasshoppers and crop failures, they surmounted all only to be nearly swept out of existence by the warfare of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwesters, wherein the site of the colony was persistently used as a battleground.

The export of the products of the colony, such as buffalo tallow, was hindered and even prevented. The settler could not engage in the fur trade without forfeiting his lands; enormous and prohibitive tariffs were charged on freights to be exported through the Company's stores on Hudson Bay. The irritation produced by these methods and the resentment felt toward the Company steadily increased. At St. Paul, where the settlers secured supplies and a trade outlet, their irritation was commended and their resentment craftily inflamed. The efforts of the Company were constantly exerted to hold the lid on the boiling Red River colony and to prevent further invasion.

For a time submission was the rule, and when the French and English half-breeds, headed by Isbister, forwarded a long memorial to the Secretary for the Colonies setting forth their grievances, the controversy waxed fierce and the troubles became acute. A French settler bought goods, intending to start a trading expedition to Lake Manitoba. The Company arrested, imprisoned him, and confiscated his goods, according to its custom. Hundreds of half-breeds poured into the settlement, and under Louis Riel, the father, the prisoner was rescued. Five years later a petition signed by six hundred half-breeds reciting grievances and requesting legislative instruction was presented to the Assembly of Canada. Unrest, continual disorder, and growing

strength of the colony marked the next ten years. In 1857 the Toronto Board of Trade petitioned the Assembly to open up the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company to trade.

In 1857 also Chief Justice Draper appeared as representative of Canadian interests before a committee of the House of Commons, and in consequence Vancouver Island, which the Company held under a twenty-one years' lease, was squeezed out of its grasp. The report of the proceedings is most interesting and the fence between witness and counsel has not been excelled in any later proceedings.

This was a period of great anxiety to the Company, and justly so, for the end was most surely approaching. Next we learn in 1862 that Governor Berens, old and obstinate, the last of the "smug and ancient gentlemen," was approached, and ultimately induced to sell outright to a Canadian syndicate, with modern ideas, the rights of the Company in Canada for $7,500,000. Great alarm and indignation were produced by this astonishing act among the chief factors and chief traders who had been regarded as having some partnership rights in the Great Company, according to the plans of union in 1821. However, they were bought off, pensioned, and placated. The new partners now began a clever warfare against yielding up any of the Company's vested rights, and for ten years they kept up

a brave fight against their impending and inevitable fate. The newspapers were utilized and social and financial pressure was brought to bear on the Legislative Assembly, and on the House of Commons. Money was poured forth in great abundance, and every device was employed that the greatest and most ingenious legal talent could suggest to avoid the surrender of its monopoly, but the times had changed and the ten years' effort was all in vain.

The confederation movement had widened the horizon of Canadian public men. In 1867, the year of confederation, Hon. William McDougall moved in the Dominion Parliament a series of resolutions which showed the advantages, both to Canada and to the Empire, of the Dominion being extended to the Pacific. He showed that settlement, commerce, and the development of the resources of a country are dependent upon a stable government; that the welfare of the Red River settlers would be enhanced; that provision was contained in the British North American Act for the admission of Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territory to the Dominion; that this wide country should be united to Canada; that in case of union the rights of any corporation, as the Hudson's Bay, association or individual, should be respected; that this should be settled judicially or by agreement; that the Indian title should be

extinguished, and that an address should be made to Her Majesty to this effect.

The resolutions were passed by a large majority of the House. The Company, driven to the wall, made a determined stand for terms. The Imperial Government insisted that the resolutions should prevail, and also that the Company should demand only reasonable compensation. It was finally agreed that the Company should relinquish all rights in Rupert's Land and Northwest Territory; that Canada should pay to the Company $1,500,000; that the Company should retain blocks of land around the posts which amounted to about 50,000 acres (a most valuable concession, since the posts were always most favorably placed); that the Company be given outright one-twentieth of all the arable land of the relinquished territory, namely, the eighth and twenty-sixth square miles of every township; that the rights of half-breeds and Indians should be respected, and that the Company should be allowed every privilege in carrying on trade as a regular trading company. In 1870, just two hundred years from the granting of the charter, the Imperial Decree was passed, and the Hudson's Bay Company, whose word had been law over 3,000,000 square miles of territory, subsided into a simple trading company in the Dominion of Canada.

The transfer, however, did not take place without disturbance, for the restive half-breeds

of the Red River country, fearing that their rights would not be respected, and aided and abetted, as many believed, by disappointed and rebellious factors in the Company's service, entered upon an armed rebellion under Louis Riel, the son. And the old fur route from Fort William, where the life of the Company had pulsed for years, now felt keenly conscious of the changed conditions when Colonel Wolseley and his men traversed the waters of Rainy River and Lake, Lake of the Woods, and Lake Winnipeg, and landed at Fort Garry, the seat of an insurrection which promptly subsided on the appearance of the troops.

Since the surrender of its charter, thirty-eight years have slipped away, during which the Company has continued its fur trade, but the forts have changed; the stockades have been taken down; the Indian now is permitted to approach and even to enter the sacred precincts of the factor's residence; the posts are gradually withdrawn as the country settles up, and at the headquarters in Winnipeg, where its downfall began, the Company, *miserabile dictu*, has a large mail-order house, and from this point it conducts its immense land business which promises to develop almost fabulous returns.

In 1890 the lands then surveyed, which were set aside for the Company, amounted to 7,000,000 acres, which were valued at

$20,000,000, and every year sees accretions to the amount of territory as the survey of the Dominion proceeds, and every year the land increases in value and adds a potent increment to the already bursting vaults of the Company. More fortunate than the East India Company, whose rapacity compelled the government to deprive it of its prey, we find the Hudson's Bay Company in secure, peaceful, and legal possession of an endless flow of gold.

Thus we have witnessed the felicitous birth of the "Great Company," surrounded by the pomp and circumstance of royalty; we have seen its adventurous youth gradually merge into a robust and turbulent manhood against which none could prevail. With the approach of age the reins of power have been torn from those mighty hands, but in the midst of all the luxury that enormous wealth can supply and undisturbed by the tumult and the clamor, the lean and slippered pantaloon sees in dreamy retrospect the warfare and the conquests of the centuries, and views with filmy eye the slow procession of the years. Yet not in vain has the Company lived and not without gratitude should it pass away. In spite of many shortcomings and selfish ambitions, the Company must be recognized as a powerful factor in the development of the New World.

As the search for gold in 1849 opened our great western lands to settlement, as the search

for Sir John Franklin resulted in an accurate survey of 6,000 miles of Arctic coast, so the search for a Northwest Passage has developed the fur trade, the pursuit of which has opened up to civilization and prosperity the immense territories of the Northland. But the Day of Destiny is close at hand; the fur and the forests in one involving ruin are doomed to disappear; the age of wheat and the settler looms large upon the horizon; railroads begin to penetrate the Dominion in the wake of the vanished fur brigades; the play is done; the curtain descends.

The forts of the Company still dot the vast solitudes where fish and game abound, and veteran factors, grizzled in the service, extend a generous hospitality to those who thread the devious trails of the silent and brooding North, a hospitality so cordial that it would be deplorable to conclude without a word of tribute.

Who can forget the delightful thrills of interest and anticipation when first the fort bursts into view? How quickly the tired arms receive new vigor! How eagerly the excited paddle dips the swirling waters! Who can fail to recall the laggard and reluctant departure in the early dawn, as the sun streams over the edge of the forest and bathes in crimson glory the gently sinuous folds of the flag? Then quietly comes the factor down to the landing with messages for the next post, and a

HB.C.

packet of letters for civilization. How carefully he repeats his suggestions regarding the route, and how seriously admonishes concerning certain rapids or portages. Only by a transient gleam of the eye does he betray his own eagerness to become a bird of passage as he bids his guests a heartfelt farewell.

The canoe grates away from the shore, the voices subside, the Indian steps silently into the stern, the steady sweep of the paddle begins—we leave with sober melancholy, and ever and always we breathe a fervid prayer that at least while we live it will be possible to launch the canoe upon the impetuous streams that wash the domain where the "lords of the wintry lakes and boundless forests" once held imperious sway, and when current and paddle bear us swiftly away that our lingering backward glance may rest upon the fort and behold at the top of the tall staff the slowly heaving folds of the blood-red banner of the HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.

The Beaver Club

SOME SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE FUR TRADE

"Men of the High North, fierce mountains love you;
Proud rivers leap when you ride on their breast.
See, the austere sky, pensive above you,
Dons all her jewels to smile on your rest.
Children of Freedom, scornful of frontiers,
We who are weaklings honor your worth.
Lords of the Wilderness, Princes of Pioneers,
Let's have a rouse that will ring round the earth."

—Service, "Men of the High North."

The Beaver Club*

In the *New York Times* of May 28, 1894, there appeared the following notice:

At the auction sale yesterday of the property of the late actress, Rosina Vokes, at 9 W. 28th St., a snuffbox was sold for $41.00, and the purchaser exclaimed, so that all in the room could hear, "I would have given $1,000.00 for that." Nearly everyone present smiled when the remark was made, thinking the purchaser was joking, but afterward he produced a letter that showed he was deeply in earnest. It was dated May 26, at the Hoffman House, and was addressed to Mr. Brian C. Hughes by his cousin, E. Hughes. It said, "There will be a sale tomorrow at Kreiser's. The lost snuffbox is to be sold. I don't know how it got into the possession of Rosina Vokes, but it is No. 581 in the catalogue and was presented to your grandfather, James Hughes, by the Earl of Dalhousie. Its intrinsic value is about $200.00, but as a family heirloom it is worth five times that to you. It may go for a song."

The snuffbox was a small affair of solid silver with gold edges, and upon the under side of its close-fitting lid was an inscription which read: "The Earl of Dalhousie to James

* A paper read before the Society, March 4, 1913.

Hughes, Esq., in remembrance of the Beaver Club, May 24, 1824."[1]

A friend whom Mr. Hughes met in the auction room expressed great interest in the souvenir and asked for its history. "Shall I make it short or long?" inquired Mr. Hughes. "Long, by all means," urged his friend. "Then come with me to the hotel and I will tell you what it signifies." Carefully guarding his treasure in the pocket of his coat, with his hand tightly clasping it, Mr. Hughes led the way to his apartments where the silver snuffbox was unwrapped and placed upon the table, so that it reflected the warm glow of the afternoon sun. Seating themselves comfortably in easy chairs the men lighted cigars and after a short pause, during which Mr. Hughes seemed to be arranging his material, he began:

"The story has to do with about fifty years of Canadian history, in the making of which my grandfather and the Beaver Club took an active and important part. For this reason I have always been intensely interested in the Dominion.

"You may not know that Sieur Verandrye was the last of the great French explorers—I say French, for though he was born at Three Rivers on the St. Lawrence, the village at that

[1] In a personal note to the writer Mr. Robert McCord of Montreal inclines to doubt the authenticity of the snuffbox.

Redrawn from picture furnished by Miss Adele Clark

A Meeting-Place of the Club

time was under French rule. At the age of twelve he became a cadet, and nine years later he was sent abroad. After a varied and active experience in European wars he returned to Canada and entered the fur trade. This venturesome occupation only partially satisfied his ambition, for he longed passionately to discover the western sea which the tales of the Indians led him to believe was not far beyond the western shore of Lake Superior. His sons—equally temperamental—warmly embraced their father's aspirations. This was in 1731, and during the next ten years they discovered and explored the country around Lake of the Woods, built Fort la Reine on Lake Winnipeg, and pushed their expeditions along the greater portion of the Saskatchewan and as far into the interior as the sources of the Missouri.

"Baffled and disappointed, Verandrye died with his quest undetermined, while his energetic sons were quickly destroyed by the parasites of an unseeing and inimical government. The Verandryes, nevertheless, had blazed the great trails over which adventurous fur traders were to carry the scattered banners of an industrial empire. The explorer died in 1742, but before it was possible even partially to utilize the results of his work, the commercial hopes of France were extinguished; for in 1759 the victorious Wolfe brought all New France under the British flag.

"The commerce of Canada—which meant of course the fur trade—now became British, just as ten years earlier (1748) the brilliant successes of Clive had completely extinguished the French trading companies in India. French trade and French traders in fur almost disappeared, since large numbers of the most enterprising of these people betook themselves to France as a mark of resentment against British control.

"Canada already harbored a goodly proportion of former subjects of Great Britain, for upon the suppression of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745, many Scotchmen of noble family had been driven out of their Highland homes—some to France, and not a few to New France. The number of these Gaelic residents was greatly augmented also after the conquest, when the Highland regiments were disbanded and whole companies of the soldiers chose to remain in the new world. Later there was added a steady influx of royalist refugees—mostly Scotch—whom the American Revolution had driven from the colonies. Nor was this all, for the Hudson's Bay Company had early appreciated the desirable qualities of these people, and had brought hundreds of them across the sea to serve in its numerous trading depots.

"In these several ways there grew up a large Scottish community in Canada where their racial peculiarities found an ample field

for exploitation. With characteristic shrewdness they quickly perceived the vast possibilities of the fur trade, which had been forced out of the hands of the French, and they undertook its revival. Alexander Henry, in 1760, was the first of the Scotchmen to follow in the path hewn out by dauntless and undespairing Verandrye. Then five years later came Curry, who with less ambition or more success found the results so satisfactory from his single expedition that he returned no more. After this the number rapidly increased. McTavish, James Finlay, the two Frobishers, Pond and Pangman were among the most prominent. Each of these daring traders—'peddler' the Hudson's Bay Company derisively called them—pushed farther and farther into the wilderness, until the country was interlaced with trails as far as Athabasca Lake on the north and to the steep barriers of the Rocky Mountains on the west. Over these trails, by travois and tumpline, moved a steady procession of costly furs.

"In long files heavily laden canoes floated down the waterways of the great Northwest and converged upon Montreal. The city rose to the occasion. The trade expanded, but obstacles appeared. The Scotch merchants spoke French like Parisians, yet their narrow clannishness did not at first permit them to make use of the Canadian-French *voyageur*—a mistake which exposed their expeditions to

many unnecessary risks and to perils that were not easily or quickly overcome.

"The French have always had a wonderful facility in attaching to themselves the natives of the country in which they reside, and this ability had nowhere been displayed to greater advantage than in their relations with the American Indians. The rigid mentality of the Scot did not lend itself quite so readily to the necessities of the business, and this, added to the dissatisfaction engendered by their own commercial rivalry, soon embittered the Indians against the Montreal merchants and their ruthless methods. More and more often the brigades were robbed of their goods, either going or coming, although the guards had frequently been doubled and trebled.

"Needless to say the old lion couching calmly on Hudson's Bay soon realized that his hunting-grounds were invaded, his food supply threatened, and his feudal rights of a century challenged. But before entering upon an active campaign against the newcomers, the Hudson's Bay Company first played upon the fears and affections, as well as the darker passions, of the Redmen, to intensify their hatred of the Scotch traders. Under this influence the already hostile Indians were aroused to the fighting pitch, and they were gathering themselves for a general uprising that would drive out all the free traders when an epidemic of smallpox swept over the country

with merciless fury. The entire Northwest was affected. Indian villages were decimated, whole tribes were extinguished, and the survivors—mentally benumbed and physically exhausted—lost their spirit of aggression in their desperate efforts to sustain life. By the same deadly blight the fur trade was so nearly annihilated that in 1782 only twelve traders took brigades into the upper country.

"While recovering from this depression, the Free Traders had a chance to think over the conditions of the business as well as the obstacles that confronted them, and in 1784 they wisely concluded that their greatest good would be developed by combining their forces. The move was judicious, not only because in this way they could best secure their brigades against the hostility of the Indians, but also the decimation of the tribes had reduced their profits to a point that forbade wasteful competition. Moreover the Hudson's Bay Company—alive to the new condition—had given up its policy of dignified indifference and could and did deliver its merchandise to the tribes on the Saskatchewan by its nearer northern route at least a month before the individual traders of Montreal could drive their canoes through the frozen Straits of Mackinac and the ice-bound waters of the Great Lakes.

"So it happened, when the trade revived, that my grandfather and twenty-eight other

traders, all Scotch but two, united their forces in what was known as the Northwest Fur Company. It was agreed that the entire business management of the new company should be vested in the conjoined firms of McTavish and the Frobishers, while the other parties acting in concert should establish permanent posts at favorable points throughout the fur country, and remain in residence there. A small number of traders who for different reasons refused to join the Northwest Company formed a combination of their own, which after a brief struggle of two seasons was absorbed by its stronger competitor.

"In the history of trading companies—it is probable that the Northwest Fur Company has never been equaled in the thoroughness of its discipline, the energy of its operations, the courage of its promoters, and the scope of its trade. In fifteen years its business annually amounted to 106,000 beaver skins and 65,000 other peltries, conducted by an army of about 2,000 men, not including the Indians. The capital required by the agents in Montreal, the number of men employed, the vast quantities of goods sent out, and the enormous store of furs received in exchange—all combined to make the business of this company the most important in Canada, a condition which promoted if it did not produce an almost universal neglect of agriculture, manufactures, and transportation. Upon the huge profits

of such an extensive business the members of the Northwest Company soon acquired the 'wealth of the Indiaman, which they expended with as much careless liberality as their national prototypes, the Nabobs.' Some bought seigniories, built mansions, or even purchased estates in the old country, to which they retired to live a life of specious and preternatural sobriety. Others used their wealth for nobler ends, and McGill University stands as a lasting monument to the wise foresight and high civic pride of one of the partners.

"Sometimes one or more of the partners would go to New York on a tour of pleasure or curiosity. On these occasions, says Irving, 'there was always a degree of magnificence of the purse about them and a peculiar propensity to visit the jewelers for rings, chains, brooches, necklaces, jeweled watches, and other costly trinkets, partly for themselves and partly for their female acquaintances, and all their actions were marked by a kind of gorgeous prodigality.'

"Having long periods of leisure and a superabundance of animal spirits, the partners soon felt the necessity for a place in Montreal wherein they could disport themselves with the same untrammeled license that they enjoyed in the wilderness. Now, among the partners gratification followed desire with hardly a time interval, so that in 1785 nineteen of them who happened to be

in Montreal assembled one day to form the Beaver Club, an organization which was as interesting from its social importance as it was notable for the immense power it wielded, both commercially and politically.

"The object of the Club as stated in the by-laws was to bring together at stated periods during the winter season a set of men highly respectable in society, who had spent their best days in a savage country, and had encountered the hazards and hardships incident to the pursuit of the fur trade in Canada. The one indispensable requirement for membership was that the candidate should have passed at least one winter in the Canadian wilderness. At first the incorporators maintained a rigid exclusiveness, but later their ranks were opened, and the limit of membership placed at fifty-five with ten honorary places. Why this number was chosen is not known, but the rule was strictly adhered to thereafter, and admission was secured only by unanimous vote.

"Each year the social gatherings were inaugurated by a dinner which all the members residing in Montreal were obliged to attend. At the same time they were required to notify the secretary if they should find themselves so situated as to prevent their attendance during the season, otherwise they were 'considered of the party and subject to the rules of the Club.' The Club assumed powers

which in the present day would be strongly resisted, as, for instance, the provision that 'no member shall have a party at his home on Club days nor accept invitations elsewhere, but if in town must attend unless prevented by illness.' Fortnightly meetings were held as a routine throughout the winter from December to April, and in addition there was a summer club for the captains of the fur vessels who in some instances were honorary members.

"At the regular gatherings an opportunity was offered of introducing into society such traders as might from time to time return from the Indian country. They were first invited as guests, and if eligible from standing and character they might by ballot become members of the Club.

"Each formal session was opened by passing the pipe of peace (calumet) according to the Indian custom, after which an officer appointed for the purpose made a suitable harangue. Then followed in their proper order the regularly established list of Club toasts, five in number, which were obligatory, but after these had gone round, the members and guests were at liberty to follow their inclinations.

"In imagination we can see these magnates sporting on their manly breasts the gold medal of the Club whereon the Company's motto, "Fortitude in Distress," was elaborately engraved—a badge of honor which by the

rules they were obliged to wear on these occasions. Richly adorned with ruffles and a profusion of gold lace, with knee breeches above their gold-clasped garters and silver-buckled shoes, the partners sat in state at their great mahogany table, while the huge fireplace snapped and roared with its load of giant logs and threw wave upon wave of heat toward the banqueters whose servants plied them with luxuries from the east and the west in regular relays. There was game from the forests and plains, fish from the Great Lakes, and costly dainties from across the sea, while the offerings to Bacchus were neither poor in quality nor limited in amount.

"Their conversation doubtless turned on the prospects of the season and the price of 'castors'; on the hardships of forest and lake, interspersed not infrequently with spicy anecdotes about their hardy factors and *voyageurs*, with now and then a sly and illuminating wink that recalled some beautiful Pocahontas met in their dreams or travels; for we have ample evidence that there was no Joseph among these puissant lords of the forests. Some made the hours slip rapidly away with Scotch story and Jacobite song, intermingled with those imperishable favorites '*La clair fontaine*' and '*En roulant ma boule.*' Others had been associated as clerks at the remote trading-posts, and the pleasures, dangers, adventures, and mishaps which they had shared together

in their wild-wood life they now recounted, and renewed the links of friendship and comraderie in convivial fraternity.

"From this time on, my grandfather used to say, the assembly took on that character of extravagance and hilarious mirth which gave considerable celebrity to the Club.[1] The wine-heated traders would sit down upon the floor of the banquet hall, one with a poker, another with shovel or tongs, and arranging themselves in regular order as in the great North-canoes, they paddled vigorously onward, shouting at full voice the inspiring boating songs, or mounting astride wine kegs they would '*saute*' or shoot the rapids from the table to the floor. When this stage was reached, all ceremony was relaxed, and clerks and *voyageurs*, servants and attendants, gathered from all parts of the building to watch the wild carousal which continued until dawn appeared and threw its disillusioning rays upon the paling candles and the red-faced revelers.

"Yet it was not alone at Montreal that these barons of the fur trade held their boisterous feasts. Either because he was younger when he first took part in them, or because they furnished him with his first relaxation

[1] The session began about 4 P.M., but the married men were permitted to retire at 9 P.M. The rest remained till 4 A.M., and on the occasion of Colonel Landman's visit, 120 bottles of wine were consumed (*Colonel Landman's Recollections*, etc).

on his return from a winter of hardship at his distant and desolate post, my grandfather always spoke with the most enthusiasm of the festivities at Grand Portage and later at Fort William—to which place the post was moved after the American War. These were in reality only adjourned meetings of the Club, but far more suitably environed by the satyr-haunted forest.

"To this rendezvous two or more of the partners from Montreal proceeded annually to meet in general council the heads of the various trading-posts of the interior who were known as the 'wintering partners.' The purpose of the gathering was to review the affairs of the Company during the preceding year, reward the meritorious, punish the inefficient and the guilty, and put into effect those plans for the future which had been agreed upon at the Club. On these occasions might be seen the change from the unceremonious times of the old French traders in their forest-worn vestments to those of the present, where the aristocratic character of the old Briton or of the feudal Highlander shone forth magnificently. Every partner who had charge of an interior post had a score of retainers at his command, and was almost as important in the eyes of his dependents as in his own, and to him the visit to the grand conference at Fort William (or Grand Portage) was the climax of the year's

work, and he repaired thither as to a meeting of Parliament.

"The partners from Montreal however were the lords of the ascendant, and coming from the midst of a luxurious and ostentatious life they quite eclipsed their compeers from the woods, whose forms and faces had been battered and scarred by hard living and hard service. 'Indeed, the partners from below considered the whole dignity of the Company as represented in their own persons, and conducted themselves in suitable style. They traversed the rivers in great state, like sovereigns making a progress. They were wrapped in rich furs, their huge canoes freighted with every convenience and luxury and manned by Canadian *voyageurs* as loyal and as obedient as their own ancestral clansmen. They carried with them cooks and bakers, together with delicacies of every kind, and an abundance of choice wine for the banquets. Happy were they if in addition they could meet with some distinguished stranger, above all some titled member of the British aristocracy, to accompany them on this stately occasion and grace their high solemnities.'

"From the picturesque departure from La Chine to the ceremonious arrival at Fort William, the journey of the partners was a pageant of pride and power. La Chine is at the head of the rapids, nine miles above Montreal, and here in the spring of the year

were assembled a brigade of ninety or a hundred canoes, each manned by eight men and a steersman. There was one pilot for each group of ten canoes, and thirty or forty guides accompanied the brigade to prevent waste of time on false leads. The scene is dramatic enough to stir the blood even to this day. '*Voyageurs* and hunters are dressed in buckskin with the gayest of silk bands around hair and neck, while pompous partners parade back and forth in ruffles and gold braid, with brass-handled pistols and daggers at belt. Into each canoe goes its cargo, two-thirds merchandise and one-third provisions, with oilcloth, tarpaulin, towlines, and kettles. As fast as they are loaded the canoes are pushed off and circle about on the river, awaiting the signal of the head steersman. He, with full knowledge of his importance, stands with his steel-shod pole high overhead like the baton of a drum major. It drops; six hundred paddles dip the water as with one arm, and instantly there shoot out the long swift canoes of the partners, racing ahead to reach the rendezvous before the cargoes arrive. Freight packers ashore raise a shout that makes the river resound. The *voyageurs* strike up their song to which the paddles keep time. The deep-throated chorus dies away in an echo—the voyage is begun.'

"Up the Ottawa River, through Lake Nipissing with its memories of Champlain,

down the French River, across Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, around the fierce rapids of the Sault Ste. Marie and along the north shore of Lake Superior they drove their frail canoes through sunshine and storm, for the Nor'-Westers were very wolves for speed. The *voyageurs* were drenched almost constantly, yet they made no murmur, save on occasion a new recruit raised a feeble voice: 'c'est la misère, c'est la misère mon Bourgeois,' a cry that was promptly smothered by the scorn and derision of his fellows, who called him a "pork eater" and other names equally effeminate and insulting.

"The brigades arrived at Fort William preceded by the swift-traveling partners, who were welcomed by loud cheers and salvos of artillery, a gratifying sound to expectant ears and proud hearts of the flinty faced Scotchmen. To each *voyageur* came a more satisfying reward in the shape of a *régale*, which meant a gallon of rum. Meanwhile the partners from the interior were arriving at frequent intervals, their canoes laden to the waterline with the packs of furs, worth $200.00 per pack. These men also had a *régale* and the entire population of partners, traders, clerks, *voyageurs*, and Indians swarmed in from east, west, south, and north to enter upon their annual carousal.

"Fort William, the scene of this important convocation, was a considerable village on the

western shore of Lake Superior, across the river from the present city of Port Arthur. Here in an immense wooden building was the great council hall, which was appropriately decorated with Indian arms, accouterments, and other trophies of the fur trade. 'The councils were held in great state, for every member felt to the utmost his responsibility, and every retainer and dependent looked up to the assembly with an awe-filled eye, as upon a House of Lords—which in truth it was. There was a vast deal of solemn deliberation and hard Scottish reasoning, with an occasional swell of pompous declamation.'

"The grave and formal councils were held in alternation with huge feasts and revels. The council hall was converted into the banquet chamber, and the tables groaned under the weight of game of all kinds, and especially such hunters' delicacies as moose noses, buffalo tongues, and beaver tails, garnished and surrounded by various dainties from Montreal prepared and served by experienced cooks. The supply of wine was unstinted, for it was a hard-drinking period, a time of royal toasts, Bacchanalian songs, and brimming bumpers.

"The chiefs wassailed in the hall and made the rafters shake with bursts of loyalty and old Scottish songs, chanted in voices cracked and sharpened by the northern blasts, while their merriment was echoed and prolonged

by a mongrel legion of retainers, *voyageurs*, half-breeds, Indian hunters, and vagabond hangers-on. These feasted sumptuously outside upon the crumbs from the rich man's table, accompanied by a full chorus of old French ditties mingled with Indian yelps and howls.

"Thus the environment for the savage pleasures of these fierce old forest vikings was far more suitable than the silent streets of Montreal patrolled by the alert step of the watch, who looked with awe, not unmixed with envy, upon the brilliant windows and vibrating walls of the Beaver Club.

"At Montreal the Club represented at once the acme of social attainment and the pinnacle of commercial success in Lower Canada, and its members dispensed their hospitality with baronial prodigality. Every distinguished stranger visiting the city was hailed and feasted at their sumptuous board. From the foundation of the Club until 1809, when he organized the rival corporation known as the American Fur Company, John Jacob Astor was a welcome guest, and from the magnates of the Club he secured many of the traders and canoemen whom he sent to the sources of the Missouri and down the Columbia on that memorable expedition to the Pacific. The *voyageurs* were the most experienced canoemen and wilderness travelers in the world, and the Club took a high and

pardonable pride in the skill of its hardy henchmen.

"Gabriel Franchère describes how a party of these *voyageurs* of which he was a member obtained considerable notoriety. They were engaged to join the Astor expedition, and with buoyant temperament and professional pride the woodsmen determined to astonish the people of the states with the sight of a Canadian boat and a Canadian crew. They accordingly fitted up a large bark canoe, such as was used in the fur trade, and amid the shouts of their fellows and the complacent approval of the Club they swung merrily into the St. Lawrence. Thence they paddled up the Richelieu River to Lake Champlain—the old route of the Iroquois war parties—and into Lake George. Portaging their canoe across to the Hudson, they plied their way cheerily southward. The banks re-echoed with their old French boating songs, and they passed the villages with whoop and halloo so as to make the honest Dutch farmers mistake them for a band of savages. In the quiet of a summer afternoon they swept in full song with regular flourish of paddle around New York to the wonder and admiration of the inhabitants.[1] But not all. There was at least one citizen to whom this exhibition,

[1] Mr. Astor was so gratified by the exhibition that he gave each of the *voyageurs* an eagle with which to drink his health (Ross's *Oregon Settlers*).

although greatly enjoyed, was by no means a novelty; for Washington Irving had sat at the great table of the Club on many an occasion. As a sensitive and impressionable youth he had gazed with wondering and inexperienced eye upon the mighty Nor'-Westers—these princes paramount at Montreal. He witnessed their lordly wassailing and listened with astonished ear to their tales of hardship and adventure. Here he received the impetus and developed the interest which subsequently culminated in those fascinating tales of the wilderness, *Astoria*, *A Tour of the Prairies*, and *Captain Bonneville*. Indeed so greatly was he interested that, upon invitation, he was sorely tempted to accompany one of the partners upon his romantic annual trip to Fort William. The invitation was declined, but his self-denial was ever after a source of bitter regret.

"In 1804 Thomas Moore was the guest of the Club, and during an excursion up the Ottawa River he heard the songs of the *voyageurs* for the first time. His mind was so fired by the wild scenery and the haunting refrain of the French *chansons* which he heard from the bark canoes at sunset, that he was inspired to write the beautiful 'Canadian Boat Song,' which in music and in words has become almost the national air of Canada.

Faintly as tolls the evening chime
Our voices keep tune and our oars keep time.
Soon as the woods on the shore look dim
We'll sing at St. Ann's our parting hymn.
Row, brothers, row—the stream runs fast,
The rapids are near and the daylight is past.

Ottawa's tide! this trembling moon
Shall see us float over thy surges soon.
Saint of this green isle hear our prayers.
O! grant us cool heavens and favoring airs.
Blow, breezes, blow! the stream runs fast,
The rapids are near and the daylight is past.

"Alexander Mackenzie, the first of the great Scotch explorers, was a member of the Club, and made it his headquarters on his return from the Arctic region and the discovery of the great river that bears his name. Again he returned to the Club after his successful journey across the steep passes of the Rocky Mountains to the waters of the western sea—the Northwest Passage by land. In this singular way was Verandrye's dream to be justified and fulfilled.

"Hither in due time came the celebrated astronomer, geographer, and explorer, David Thompson—and also Simon Frazer—to rest from their journeys to the Pacific, while Peter Grant, the historiographer, with Malhiot, the French trader from Lac du Flambeau in Northern Wisconsin, found convivial fellowship at the Club. Later on Sir John Franklin, then a lieutenant, sat with many others in

the great hall, brimful of life, buoyant with hope and heedless of perils by forest or sea, and here he pledged the health of the Club while the piercing northern blasts were howling over the brow of the neighboring Mount Royal, with some faint premonition perhaps of that still wilder blast over the icy slopes of the grim arctic shores where he was destined to yield up his noble spirit at the call of duty.

"In Montreal and Quebec the partners frequented the best society and were received with a pleasure, due not alone to their rank and wealth, but to their engaging manners and interesting conversation. But it was not entirely in this social aspect that the members of the Club won distinction—they wielded a broader and deeper influence. If in Canada they showed amiable and engaging qualities, among the *voyageurs* and Indians they were men of business—'Crafty Wolves of the North'—hard and sinewy in muscle and conscience. They defended what they were pleased to call their *rights* with brutish ferocity. They were in business to secure furs as honestly as convenient, but at any rate to secure furs. The fur trade of Lower Canada had its official headquarters at the establishment of the combined firms of McTavish and the Frobishers, but the real commercial center of the colony was at the Beaver Club. Nor was this all. The official residence of the Governor-

General of Canada was at Quebec, but in his legislative council sat the sturdy Nor'-Wester, McGillivray, and it was frequently demonstrated that this strong spirit of the trading company kept a watchful eye and a stern hand on the affairs of state. Did the question of parochial schools arise—the Beaver Club was interested. Was it the conduct of the war with America, the method and form of defense, or the raising of funds—the prestige and experience of the Beaver Club was the decisive influence. In brief, no rule was laid down, no order went forth, either in the political or commercial world of Canada, that had not been considered and passed upon from the standpoint of the Club.

"It was a position of extreme advantage, and it raised the Northwest Company to the zenith of its power. Its rivals had all been ruined or absorbed, save only the Honorable Hudson's Bay Company which, deeply intrenched in its northern fastness, still held defiantly to its territorial rights and waged aggressive war. For twenty-five years these great competitors had fought foot to foot and point to point without advantage to either. Where one planted a fort the other followed within the year. They not only strove to reach the Indians first, but when one succeeded the other would give desperate battle for the furs already secured. Neither hesitated to rob the brigades of the rival company, nor

to murder the clerk in charge when a preponderance of strength gave assurance of victory.

"Great as financiers, marvelous as explorers, facile as traders, brave of spirit, and with the Company's motto, 'Fortitude in Distress,' ever before them, the Beaver Club now settled down to the last decade of the battle. The members gathered as usual, and even displayed an unwonted boisterousness in their regular carousals, but in spite of all a different spirit was manifest, a somber tinge colored the happenings at the Club, and Destiny with flying scourge drove it swiftly on to tragedy and dissolution. The contest, which had been a commercial rivalry hitherto, bloody and desperate but more or less circumspect, now became an open and relentless warfare in which Indian lives were prodigally sacrificed and the white man strove with head, hand, and weapon against his fellow. The faces of the 'Nor'-Westers' were grim and set with deadly resolution—their eyes were steely and mostly the hand that held the tasseled cane clenched it about the middle.

"As the thoughtful citizen of the present sees with dismay the ruin of the seal herds or bemoans the greedy and reckless waste of our forests, so the far-sighted colonist of those times might well lament the barbarous and insensate conduct of the fur trade. Whisky was poured out in a flood, the naked warriors

of forest and plain were totally demoralized, while the struggle for peltries was carried on with a fury and a deadliness that caused it to appear less like a licensed commerce than a wholesale brigandage. If the partners in Montreal were heedful of public opinion, their associates in the wilderness were by no means so scrupulous. Their greed felt no limitations; justly sure of applause if they succeeded, they feared rebuke only in case they failed. Such were the conditions between the rival companies and such was the condition of the fur trade when a new element entered the contest.

"In 1805, Lord Selkirk became interested in the country around Red River and Lake Winnipeg, and on his trip to Prince Edward Island with a body of colonists he came to Montreal where he was entertained by the Club. Here he met my grandfather whose post at Fort des Prairies, near Lake Manitoba, enabled him to give his Lordship information that he much desired. Again in 1809 he returned with the same intense interest in the upper country. My grandfather was in Montreal that winter, and naturally spent most of his time at the Club. Lord Selkirk met him again and again and questioned him so keenly and to such length that my grandfather's suspicions were aroused. Lord Selkirk, he reflected, could have no object in undertaking the fur trade, for he was already

immensely wealthy, and, if he wished, could easily buy a partnership in the Company, and since neither my grandfather nor his fellows could form any conception of disinterestedness in one of the British nobility, the motive remained undiscovered. Lord Selkirk returned to Great Britain to develop his scheme, which was nothing less than the colonization of the Red River valley. He already had a large interest in the Hudson's Bay Company, and as the shares had depreciated from £250 to £50 per share, owing to the warfare with the Northwest Company, he had no difficulty in so increasing his holdings that with his friends he controlled a majority of the stock. Thereupon he forced the Company to cede to him a tract of 110,000 square miles of land near the junction of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, and by 1811 he was able to start his first colony of seventy people, all from Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland. The poor agitated emigrants sailed in three ships for Hudson Bay. At Fort York they wintered and then started in the spring for the colony, which was destined to become the present city of Winnipeg.

"The Beaver Club was bitterly opposed to this movement from its inception, first, because it was inaugurated through the hostile Hudson's Bay Company and might therefore greatly further those interests in the Red River country; secondly, because it flatly

contravened their claim to proprietorship of the Northwest, and finally, because settlement and agriculture were incompatible with a continuance of the fur trade. 'When the settler comes the mink and the beaver disappear. Where the ploughshare turns its furrow the antelope flies warily to distant coverts.'

"So the Beaver Club watched with lowering brows and deep-throated curses the advance of the emigrants, but beyond refusing on various pretexts to sell food to the colonists, they refrained from interference. They doubtless hoped the frightful hardships which the settlers experienced would drive them to retreat or destruction. A second detachment of emigrants arrived in 1813, and a third in the following year. The Beaver Club was seething with suppressed indignation, and now awaited only a fitting occasion to declare war. Henceforth the drama moves steadily and inevitably to the catastrophe.

"For two years the agents of the Club had been warning Lord Selkirk by post that the attitude of the Indians was becoming more and more hostile toward the colonists, and doubt was expressed whether they—the Northwest Company—could hold them much longer in check. Although Selkirk fully understood the sinister meaning of this hint and appreciated clearly the real source of the danger to his colony, yet his only reply was to ship arms and munitions of war to the settlement.

"It now happened that the scarcity of provisions and the constantly increasing numbers of the colonists brought the menace of famine, so the governor of the colony prohibited the export of any provisions until the settlers had been given opportunity to purchase their winter's supply. The resident factor of the Northwest Company received instructions from Montreal to disregard this order and to ship out the supplies as fast as possible. The governor, realizing that his colony would probably perish, sent a body of men to take possession of the provisions that remained in the post of the Northwest Company. Although this action was far less violent and highhanded and far more justifiable under the circumstances than hundreds which had been executed by and in behalf of the Company, yet it was promptly utilized as a pretext for the long-desired war. Instructions were forwarded to the annual convocation at Fort William to begin the contest at once and *Colonia delenda est* became the watchword of the Club.

"Duncan Cameron, a Scotchman and a royalist refugee from the revolting American colonies, was given charge of the campaign. He was allowed and expected to employ all the influence and unlimited resources of the powerful Company against those poor fellow-countrymen who were trying to eke out in the new world a livelihood which, miserable

as it was, obdurate Nature and oppressive landlords refused them in the old. It is probable that none of the partners was more willing to undertake this mission nor better endowed to execute it.

"In July, 1814, Cameron departed for his post, which was located about a mile from the new settlement. By means of the common nationality and his insinuating and persuasive manner, Cameron soon convinced about three-fourths of the colonists that he was devoted heart and soul to their interests. He also utilized the timely appearance of Ober's comet to terrorize the more ignorant and superstitious. Their governor had been arrested and sent to Montreal to stand trial for the seizure of the provisions, and Cameron took advantage of his absence to induce the settlers to leave Red River and locate under the Company's protection at some point along the St. Lawrence that he should select. He removed all the arms, including the cannon, from the settlement to his own good fort, and then the settlers who had been unwilling to follow him were intimidated by his men until in despair they consented to abandon their homes. These were put into boats and sent back down the river toward Hudson Bay, while Cameron with the larger body started for Fort William to attend the annual convocation. He left some men to burn the settlement, and in June, 1815, eleven months

from his arrival, smoking ruins marked the site of the promising colony. Cameron was warmly felicitated and handsomely rewarded at Fort William for his achievement, and the news was sent in all haste to Montreal.

"The Club was at the height of its jubilation over the success of this unscrupulous performance when an express canoe came swiftly down the St. Lawrence bearing the most vexatious tidings. The band of colonists traveling to Hudson Bay had found a leader in one Colin Robertson, and having been joined by a new draft from over sea had returned to the settlement, resumed the lands, retaken by force their arms and agricultural implements from the post of the Northwest Company, and were harvesting the crops which Cameron's men had neglected to destroy.

"Meanwhile Robertson, though deprived of the water route by the vigilance of the Nor'-Westers, had found means to send overland to Lord Selkirk a full description of the disaster that had overtaken his colony, as well as the manner and agency by which it was accomplished. This message was carried through bands of hostile Indians and through the well-guarded lines of the Northwest Company by a trapper named La Jimmonière, whose wonderful winter trip of more than one thousand miles is in itself an interesting story.

"Lord Selkirk now applied to the Governor-General of Canada for protection for his

colony, and asked for a military guard. When the matter came up in the Council it was strongly opposed by McGillivray, who was the political and diplomatic head of the war, just as Sir Alexander Mackenzie was the executive officer in the field. McGillivray being the Governor's influential adviser and the dominant head of the Northwest Company, he easily posed as a high authority on the fur country, and, attributing the destruction of the colony to an Indian attack, he urged that it was a sporadic affair and not at all likely to occur again. He dwelt especially on the difficulty and danger of transporting troops so far from their base of supplies and into a country already on the verge of famine. He stated that it would be a great and entirely unnecessary expense to Canada, and finished by declaring that the presence of troops in that country would so inflame the already exasperated savages that a general uprising would ensue and all the whites be massacred. His arguments were effective, and the troops were not sent. Lord Selkirk, who had spent the winter in Montreal, was defeated but not discouraged.

"Help came in a very opportune and unexpected manner. At the conclusion of the war in 1812 three British regiments had been left in Canada, namely, the Meuron, the Wattville, and Glengarry, the two first being from Switzerland. They were now about to dis-

band, and as many of the soldiers did not wish to return to Europe, Lord Selkirk induced them to accept homesteads in the Red River colony. Having been armed and equipped, they started in June for Red River, led by Lord Selkirk in person. They traveled as rapidly as possible, hoping to anticipate a second blow which rumor persistently declared was about to fall upon the colony. Hurrying across Lake Huron they ascended St. Mary's River, only to be met at Sault Ste. Marie by two canoes bearing tidings of the massacre of Seven Oaks and the total destruction of the colony for a second time. Selkirk pushed on and found at Fort William the unhappy confirmation of the story. He learned that the settlement had been put in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company with Governor Semple in command, as it was understood that a second attack was impending. On June 19, 1816, troops of half-breeds (*bois brulés*) which the Northwest Company had collected for the purpose appeared in sight and advanced upon the settlement. They were disguised as Indians and Governor Semple, with about twenty-five men, left Fort Douglas and went forward to discover their intentions. A little over half a mile from the fort, at a place called Seven Oaks, the parties met. After a few words between the leaders, the irresponsible half-breeds opened fire. With deadly aim and savage zeal they

continued to shoot until Governor Semple and twenty of his men were killed. There had been no resistance, and when Fort Douglas was threatened it too was given up. All the colonists were dispersed, their buildings burned, and the Nor'-Westers remained in complete control.

"The acts of Lord Selkirk in securing justice for this outrage, his arrival at the colony with his men, the collection of the fugitives and the rejuvenation of the settlement under his inspiring leadership are no part of this story. Suffice it to say that the colony thenceforward suffered only from natural obstacles which were quietly met and courageously overcome, and the little settlement steadily grew and prospered until it became the principal city of Central Canada.

"The news of the brutal massacre at Seven Oaks was received with mixed feelings at the Beaver Club. Some blusteringly referred to it as the glorious news from the North, but the more thoughtful were greatly agitated. They foresaw the possible consequences with dread and apprehension. The immediate effect of the tragedy was the startled recoil of the principals. Later it was discovered that both the Club and the Northwest Company had received mortal wounds. The Nor'-Westers promptly disclaimed responsibility for the attack, and as a mark of good faith to forestall a recurrence, they entered upon a truce with

FORT GARRY

It was from this fort that Governor Semple went out to his death at the Massacre of Seven Oaks

their great rival. This continued until 1821, when a permanent union was effected. The Hudson's Bay Company remained supreme, and into its vitiated blood was poured the exuberant energy and somewhat overbold hardihood of the bellicose Nor'-Westers.

"The Club meanwhile lost its unity of spirit. It became a place of dissension, where the members wrangled over the Seven Oaks affair, just as the legal questions during the same period were tediously contested in the courts. The vigor and strength of the organization had departed, and bitter enmities developed. To be sure the Club lingered along in a weak, futile, and declining way for two or three years after the merging of the companies, but the divergence of trade from Montreal to the ports of Hudson Bay was fatal to its existence, and the Club finally came to its official end in 1824.

"Upon its dissolution the Earl of Dalhousie, then governor of Canada, presented to my grandfather this silver snuffbox which he used constantly up to the time of his death. It then disappeared. For many years old cups of rude design and pieces of solid plate bearing the mark of the Club appeared at intervals in the auction rooms as mute witnesses of the roistering days of old, but no trace of the snuffbox has ever been found until today. You can see, therefore, why I value it so highly. It is my only souvenir of

my grandfather and of the mighty Company in whose acts and counsels he took so notable a part.

"It is doubtless true the Company debased and corrupted the Indians, but it was the means, though an obstinate and unwilling means, whereby the interior of the immense Northwest was opened up and explored from the inland seas to the Arctic Ocean and west to the Pacific. Impelled by a greed for furs as rapacious as the Spanish lust for gold, the magnates of the fur trade not only established their posts where cities now stand, but they traced innumerable highways and developed the possibility of traveling with ease and safety over prairie, river, and lake, and through unmeasured tracts of tangled wilderness. It was a period of great enterprise, of thrilling adventure, and almost inevitably of flagrant crimes.

"Of the old Northwest Company only the spirit remains smouldering in the heart of its former rival. The fur-bearing animals are nearly extinct. It is the unwelcome end so clearly foreseen by the traders. The rolling prairies and forested wilds over which the trade was conducted have been converted into extensive farmsteads which support a spreading civilization. The feudal grandeur of Fort William is a thing of the past; the Beaver Club which for forty years dominated the social, commercial, and political life of

Canada has closed its doors; its "council chamber is silent and desolate; the banquet hall no longer echoes to the old-world ditty, for the stalwart *masters of the wilderness* have passed away."

A Dream of Empire

THE ADVENTURES OF TONTY
IN OLD LOUISIANA

"We were dreamers, dreaming greatly, in the man-
stifled town;
We yearned beyond the sky-line where the strange
roads go down.
Came the whisper, came the vision, came the power
with the need,
Till the soul that is not man's soul was lent us to lead.

. . . . . .

Follow after—follow after! we have watered the root,
And the bud has come to blossom that ripens for fruit!
Follow after—we are waiting, by the trails that we
lost,
For the sounds of many footsteps, for the tread of a
host.
Follow after—follow after—for the harvest is sown;
By the bones about the wayside ye shall come to your
own."

—Kipling, "The Song of the Dead."

A Dream of Empire*

The Adventures of Tonty in Old Louisiana

The memory of the French dominion in America arouses but feeble response in the modern mind, and yet, when we invoke its "gallant shades, they rise upon us from innumerable graves beside the water highways of the past. Innumerable camp-fires lift their spectral flames, and against the sombre background of the forest" we see in the flickering light those stern-faced men whose courage won a continent.

Canada at that time was a colony in which feudalism and paternalism were the paramount principles of government, and under the rule of Louis XIV, priest and noble, warrior and civilian, knight and squire wove intricate figures of romance in the great tapestry of the New World. Whether impelled by love of adventure, the lure of ambition, the needs of commerce, or religious fervor, they gave free rein to their enthusiasm and traversed the wilderness in every direction, while their fleets of canoes floated on the broad bosoms of the Great Lakes or swept along the rivers with paddle and song.

No danger daunted nor obstacle deterred the ardent nobility of New France, as in their

*A paper read before the Society, September 14, 1911.

frayed and faded uniforms they pushed boldly into the interior, making treaties, building forts, surveying, measuring, and calculating with militant intelligence and prophetic eyes. Nor did commerce hesitate to follow or indeed to accompany the footsteps of the pathfinders. No tribe was so remote as to escape the vigilance of the trader with his crew of rollicking and irresponsible *voyageurs*, clad in their gaudy caps and coats of fringed buckskin.

But while swarthy Frenchmen with sword at heel ranged from the St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes and from the Ohio to the Mississippi, the English colonists with rifle and axe crept relentlessly up the river valleys from the bays and gulfs of the Atlantic to the distant Alleghanies. Spreading by contiguity and occupying the region overrun is deadly in its certainty, but extremely slow. Long before the English front had reached the foothills the peril was recognized. The alert French leaders foresaw that the mountain barrier would be only temporary, that soon other buckskin wanderers would drift insistently westward, until finally, in ceaseless caravans, the colonists would sweep through Cumberland Gap and overwhelm the great valley.

Then it was that Frontenac, La Salle, Tonty, and later Iberville planned to restrict the English influence and stop the forward movement by exploring the Mississippi and by planting armed trading-posts along the un-

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known rivers of the interior. Dominion over the native tribes and the control of the fur trade went hand in hand, and both were necessary adjuncts to success in a game of state-craft that was both personal and political. Hampered by governmental restraints and only occasionally supported by the languid hand of an apathetic ministry, Frontenac and La Salle inaugurated the long campaign.

La Salle had already explored the Ohio and Joliet and Marquette had discovered the Mississippi, when in 1678 La Salle returned from France with a royal commission to examine the Great River, open it up to French Commerce, and secure it to France by actual possession. With him, from the Old World, came Henry de Tonty—the man with the iron hand.

To readers of Parkman, Mason, and Legler, Tonty needs no introduction. He was born in 1650, the son of an Italian refugee, and in due time entered the French army, which in those days furnished the most desirable outlet for active and ambitious spirits. He saw much service, and in the battle of Lebisso, in Sicily, lost a hand which was replaced by an iron hook. After various alternations of fortune he was referred to La Salle and became his most loyal friend, his most unselfish and efficient aid.

Landing at Quebec, La Salle and Tonty paid their respects to the Governor and departed

for Fort Frontenac, now Kingston, which was to be the base for their subsequent movements. Their first care was to build a ship to be used for trading purposes on the Great Lakes west of Niagara Falls. Cayuga Creek, six miles above the cataract, was selected as the most convenient site for the work, and at this point trees were felled, a clearing made, a warehouse erected, and the "Griffon" begun. Except the timbers, everything for the construction and equipment of the ship had to be brought up the St. Lawrence from Quebec, and the building itself had to be done by mutinous workmen who lived in a wilderness surrounded by hostile Indians. Late in the fall the project was begun, and with but slight hints of the serious difficulties Tonty states tersely that "the vessel was completed in the Spring of 1679." Self-denying as usual, Tonty did not at first sail on the "Griffon," but went ahead by canoe to pick up some men at the straits (Detroit). Here on the 10th of August his signal columns of smoke were seen from the ship as she ploughed the waters on the first trading voyage to the Indians of the upper lakes.

The expedition stopped for a time at Mackinac, while Tonty made a side trip to the "Soo" and then all went to Green Bay. From this place the vessel was sent back laden with furs, while Tonty and La Salle pushed up Lake Michigan and reached the Illinois by way of

the St. Joseph and Kankakee Rivers. At the foot of Peoria Lake they built Fort Crèvecœur and made a treaty with the fickle savages who dwelt near by. At the same time they began to construct another vessel for use upon the rivers, and detached Father Hennepin, the Recollect, on a voyage of exploration to the headwaters of the Mississippi.

Meanwhile nothing was heard from the "Griffon," so La Salle started in March on the 1,500-mile trip overland to Fort Frontenac in search of news. At Cayuga Creek, and again on arrival at the fort, his great fear was confirmed. The "Griffon" was lost with cargo and crew, but how and where was never learned. Shortly afterward two *voyageurs* came in from Tonty with more ill tidings. Tonty wrote that soon after La Salle's departure he had started north along the shores of the Illinois River in search of a site for a post and during his absence the men at Fort Crèvecœur had mutinied, destroyed the fort, plundered the magazine, and fled to the woods with their spoil. By this misfortune Tonty was deprived of all his food and ammunition and compelled to seek refuge among the Illinois Indians. From this haven he was driven by the aggressions of the insatiable Iroquois, and with a few faithful followers he made a winter retreat of terrible hardship to Green Bay.

La Salle, meanwhile, had hurried back to the Illinois country to relieve Tonty, and not finding him there he followed him to Mackinac in the greatest anxiety, for both La Salle and Tonty had been convinced by malicious reports that the other had been slain.

The extent of the disaster was only appreciated clearly when the friends met at Mackinac three months later. To Tonty personally the consequences were not serious, but all of La Salle's fortune was lost with the "Griffon." Nevertheless, La Salle's ambition was only momentarily depressed. During the winter his spirits rose to even greater heights, and finding in Tonty a comrade serene and hopeful in the face of all they began their preparations to explore the Mississippi.

The summer was gone before the expedition could start. This added to their perils, for in the fall Lake Michigan is subject to severe and sudden storms. Rough experience they had, but by keeping close to the shore they reached the Chicago River on December 21 (1681) without serious mishap. Paddling up the south branch they dragged the canoes and baggage on sledges across the frozen waters of Mud Lake and the adjacent marshes which made up the Chicago portage, and continued on sledges over the thick ribbed ice of the Desplaines. Upon reaching the Illinois River, they launched their canoes, and by February 6 (1682) the Mississippi lay before them.

Tonty, who saw the river for the first time, said it was grand, large, and deep, comparable to the mighty St. Lawrence. The real object of the adventure was now in sight. Boldly they pressed on. Day after day and mile after mile the little band drove steadily southward. With senses keenly alert to the mysterious perils of the hostile shores and treacherous waters, they felt their way deeper and deeper into the unknown. They passed the mouth of the Missouri—a roaring torrent of muddy water which hurled into the Mississippi great trees and islands wrenched from the inconstant shores. Hills rose from the water with gentle slope, or cliffs of forbidding height towered over the river only to descend to reedy banks or to meadows black with buffalo. Then the Mississippi broadened into a long lake whose marshy edges were curtained by the waving stems of cane.

At last, after three adventurous months, they reached the upper end of the Delta. Here they separated—La Salle, Tonty, and D'Autray took each a different arm of the river and swept rapidly down the current.

In three days their little gondolas of bark were tossing on the blue waters of the Gulf. They met as agreed, and went into camp on the low wind-swept marsh that divides the river channels. The latitude of the mouth was carefully taken, but unhappily they had no instruments with which to determine the

longitude. It was a fatal omission, for on it La Salle was to risk his life—and lose. On the next day a cross was erected with appropriate ceremonies and possession taken in the name of the King (April 9, 1682).

The first part of the plan was satisfactorily accomplished. Next their provisions failed, and La Salle became desperately ill, so Tonty started alone for Quebec to notify Frontenac of their success. Waylaid by hostile Indians and narrowly escaping the stake, he nevertheless completed his mission and returned to Mackinac. Three months later La Salle joined him at the Island and together they returned to construct upon "Starved Rock" the historic Fort St. Louis of the Illinois.

This rock was a sandstone cliff 150 feet high and accessible only from one side. It was first called *Le Rocher*, but after the Indian tragedy of later years it was known everywhere as "Starved Rock." On its acre broad top the fort was built and the single approach was buttressed and barricaded until it was impregnable.

It was now necessary to enlist the interest of the Redmen, and from his lofty fortress Tonty went east and west, north and south in search of allies, until in the great valley beneath the rock were assembled the Miamis, Shawnees, Piankishaus, and Illini. Their tepees dotted the plain and their canoes swarmed upon the river: twenty thousand

Indians mutually suspicious and antagonistic, but all leagued to France.

The control of the fur trade and the supremacy of the Mississippi seemed certain. To complete the long, thin line of fortified posts which was to connect the Gulf of St. Lawrence with the Gulf of Mexico, a colony must be placed at the mouth of the River, and this could be done only with the aid of the King. To secure this Tonty was left in command of the fort while La Salle made the wearisome journey to France. So they parted —as it happened, forever.

How La Salle returned with his fleet, missed the mouth of the river, and perished on the plains of Texas has been told and retold.

But deep in the wilderness came the news from Quebec that La Salle's expedition had landed on the Gulf, and with twenty men Tonty made the second descent of the river to meet this friend. He sent boats east and west of the Delta for ninety miles, but he found no sign along the lonely Gulf, and when he gave up the quest he left a letter for La Salle with a chief of the Mougoulaches, who lived on the Mississippi about a hundred miles above the present city of New Orleans.

Upon his return to the Rock he received orders from Governor Denonville, Frontenac's successor, to return to Canada and join his cousin Duluth in an expedition against the Iroquois which the Governor was preparing.

After a year of this warfare he again sought his rock and learned that Joutel with two survivors of the La Salle expedition had arrived with the report that La Salle was well and on his way north by way of the Red River. This was a wilful deception, and while Tonty was preparing joyfully to receive his chief, the melancholy truth came out that La Salle had been assassinated. Again the tireless Tonty moved down the Mississippi and up the Red River to succor the survivors and punish the murderers. The latter especially he desired most ardently. Into village after village of hostile savages he marched almost alone. Boldly he demanded the murderers of La Salle, but all was vain. Traces of his countrymen indeed he found, but only such as convinced him that the expedition was totally lost. He continued to advance, hoping against hope, until he came within three days' march of the scene of the assassination. Here his men mutinied and he was compelled to return to Fort St. Louis.

Although devoid of money and influence, Tonty henceforth occupied the Rock and strove to arouse the court to a new effort. But the government which had received a gleam of light from the enthusiastic and forceful presentation of La Salle now felt that it had been over-persuaded by a visionary whose failure had brought suspicion upon the ven-

ture and distrust upon the adventurers. This feeling, which was encouraged by the many enemies of La Salle, fell with peculiar force upon Tonty, whose remoteness and isolation made counter-argument impossible. Through observation and sympathy he had become thoroughly imbued with the high ambitions of his chief, and he saw with equal clearness the necessity and the feasibility of their fulfilment. Ten years had elapsed since Tonty came to America full of hope and confidence—the able colleague of an inspiring leader. What was the result? La Salle was dead; the "Griffon" lost; Fort Frontenac in the hands of his French competitors, and Tonty remained in charge of the one post in the valley that flew the flag of France. In spite of these disasters much had been accomplished. The Mississippi had been followed to the sea and the way was open for commercial exploitation, military possession, and colonization. To these ends Tonty devoted himself.

The story so briefly reviewed depends thus far on various well-known "relations," as well as Tonty's own reports. Henceforth the narrative becomes more circumstantial, but the sources are few and scanty, the information imperfect, and not hitherto emphasized in respect to Tonty. The incidents themselves, so trivial apparently, are the premonitory drops which are to culminate in the storm of the Seven Years' War, when Teuton and

Roman, impelled by the hereditary animosity of centuries, are to meet in a desperate struggle wherein the extensive patrimony of the Redmen is to be the reward of the victor.

France, with her power of initiative unhampered by a hostile parliament, sat in trouble and uncertainty. She was not unmindful of her opportunity, but she doubted its value. Moreover her attention was strongly distracted; William III of England was incessantly busy. By diplomacy or by intrigue, by secret or open war, he harried the French in Europe and threatened their colonial possessions. To oppose him required a vigilant and unflagging energy. Besides this enemy beyond his borders, Louis XIV was absorbed at home in two personal ambitions, apparently unrelated, but really convergent in tendency and termination. In order to satisfy his mistress De Maintenon, and to secure religious uniformity throughout his dominions, he adopted a course of persecution toward the Huguenots which drove hundreds of thousands of the most industrious and productive of his subjects out of France, not to the colonies as a higher politics and even self-interest demanded, but into the arms of the enemy.

At the same time Louis was draining the kingdom to the last sou for the construction of his royal residence at Versailles.

In America, where life was less complex, the compelling importance of the local issue

was clearly foreseen, and Frontenac, La Salle, Tonty, Iberville, and Bienville set out gallantly to perfect the French title and assure its defense. Of these Bienville alone lived to see the failure of their plans. In the long contest, characterized by singleness of aim and self-sacrifice, the way was marked by many tragedies among his relatives and friends. Yet in chagrin and humiliation he saw the results of their consecrated efforts slip from the indifferent hands of France. It brought him broken-hearted to the grave. The death of his brother, Iberville, the loss of his influence at court, and the industry of his enemies may have given him some intimation of the futility of his struggle with fate, but it made no change in his resolution. So throughout the life of Tonty one sees an inexorable purpose, but also one has only to listen to hear the flutter of those dim, shadowy wings that so frequently intervene between man and accomplishment. The fruits of these activities were not lost, though the lifelong devotion of the leaders availed them nothing in a personal sense. Nor did the efforts of inconstant France, nor yet of victorious Britain, disturb in the least that relentless onward movement which had its origin in the European wars and its culmination in the Great Republic.

It is said that all men are divided in two classes: the Olympians who rule events and receive as a natural tribute all the gifts of

nature, and the Titans who with courage and manly fortitude forever strive against the decrees of the gods; more than many does Tonty seem to belong to the latter class. The Imp of the Perverse attended his steps and misfortune met him at every turn, from the loss of his hand at Lebisso to his melancholy death at Mobile, and yet no man more strongly enlists our affectionate admiration.

Possibly for this reason there is an appealing significance in the career of Tonty—an intimately personal relation which is absent from the gloomy La Salle and the brilliant Iberville. Probably it is due to this quality that so many writers have chosen Tonty as the theme of historical description or of romantic narration. Unhappily there exists but meager evidence of his many interests, and yet wherever he appears, be it on the brink of success or in the midst of actual or impending disaster, we see his sturdy figure serene, resourceful, and undismayed. Every incident in his life is particularly interesting and appealing to the residents of Illinois, but we like best and quite naturally to associate him with the lonely sandstone pinnacle where for twenty years he made his home: a home, indeed, but not the abode of peace. The savage foes around the fort he could meet with diplomacy or with open and successful war, but craft alone could avail against the enemies he had inherited from La Salle. With stealth and greedy cunning

they enmeshed him in treachery within the walls, and conspired to destroy him in Quebec and Montreal. So year followed year, and from his rocky fortress he maintained his command over the Mississippi River valley, but his eyes were turned ever longingly and anxiously to France.

Throughout this expansive region, where the murmuring winds, the flowing waters, and the roving Redmen held fickle dominion, he hoped to see colonies of his industrious countrymen, while ever before him was the noble vision of the Great River which through hundreds of miles of darkling forest glides in stately curves to the southern Gulf. Like Ulysses on Calypso's isle, Tonty's heart was destined to be wrung with ten years of longing, and yet the period was not wasted in lamentations, but rather it was spent in manly, albeit fruitless, petitions to the King for permission to undertake, and the support that was necessary to, the plan he burned to execute.

Then Frontenac, who had been recalled to the governorship of New France, suddenly died, and with the loss of this sole remaining friend who could influentially approach the court, hope fled. Yet the time was now at hand, and after ten years of pleading, after ten years of lonely vigil, the court was again aroused. It was ordained that the plans of La Salle should be taken up, the mouth of the

river be definitely located by way of the Gulf, and a settlement planted thereon. All this was arranged, but it was to be undertaken, not by Tonty, the natural heir who craved the command, but by Le Moyne d'Iberville, whose dashing exploits in Hudson Bay had won the favor of the king.

By the treaty of Ryswick, which had just been concluded, the English posts on the northern bay were safe from attack and Iberville turned his restless mind and conquering hand to the problems in the South.

There was a bright possibility that here also he could meet and baffle the English foe, although open warfare was forbidden. His expedition left France on September 5, 1698, and on the 2d of the following March, Iberville entered the mouth of the Mississippi. He had with him the reports of all previous explorers, including that confusing narrative which had been attributed to Tonty, and since it was necessary definitely to identify the waters he explored, he made a long journey up stream in search of the fabulous "fork" which had been so positively described by Hennepin as a characteristic of the lower river.

Failing to find this landmark, but convinced that the river must be the Mississippi, he returned to the fleet. During the backward journey he learned of the existence of that famous letter to La Salle which Tonty had left with the Indians fourteen years before. This

he secured in exchange for a hatchet, and all uncertainty disappeared.

Then followed the settlement at Biloxi from which Iberville soon departed, leaving the new colony under the guardianship of his young brother Le Moyne de Bienville, and Sieur de Sauvole as titular governor.

The Great Canadian's plans were those of La Salle vastly amplified by his far-seeing military brain. Not only would he unite the French posts along the Mississippi River, and where necessary establish new ones, so that a glittering armored line would hold back the advance of the English, but in addition he hoped by skilful management to form the Indians into an auxiliary corps to make guerilla war, harass the English front, and hold it at the Alleghanies.

In January, 1700, Iberville's ships again entered the Gulf with provisions, money, and men to reinforce the establishment at Biloxi and erect the new post upon the lower Mississippi. It was none too soon. The irrepressible English, relying upon the indefinite westward sweep of King Charles's Carolina grant, had already entered the river to take possession. To be sure they had been induced to leave, by the diplomatic representations of Bienville, but Iberville fully realized the emergency and prepared at once to meet it.

After some exploration of the neighboring creeks and bayous, he sent Bienville up to a

tribe of Indians known as the Baygoulas. It was hoped, and justly, that these Indians who knew the low and marshy shores of the river intimately might point out a site for the fort that was free from inundation. Four days later Iberville followed his brother, and at a point about thirty-eight miles below the present city of New Orleans Fort La Boulaye was begun.

It is here, on the 16th of February, 1700, that the mysterious weaving of the loom of Destiny again brought Tonty into the web. Sauvole, the governor, had written him in the summer of 1699 that Biloxi was occupied and had invited him to come down and visit the new settlement. Whether an internal conflict preceded his decision, or whether he felt the envy and jealousy natural under the circumstances, we have no means of knowing; we only know that in response to Sauvole's letter he generously descended the river to concert with Iberville extensive plans for French dominion in the valley.

Now Iberville possessed to a high degree that magnetism, that subtle fire of personality, which inheres to leadership, and with the habit of subordination that Tonty had acquired with his military discipline he fell a willing victim to the congenial ambitions and mesmeric enthusiasm of the great Canadian. From now on we shall find him furthering the ambitious designs of the statesmanlike Iber-

ville with the same zeal and efficiency with which he served La Salle.

Two days were spent beside the rising walls of the fort, during which they discussed the news from France and the needs of the colony. The political situation with reference to their Spanish and English rivals was carefully considered, and Iberville unfolded his far-reaching plans to one whose co-operation would be highly important. Here also Tonty definitely disavowed the authorship of the so-called memoirs which someone in France had published under his name. These memoirs, abounding in exaggerations and untruths, had caused Iberville much delay and annoyance in his endeavor to identify the river. Besides the erection of the fort, Iberville planned at this time to explore Red River and the Mississippi as far as the Natchez village, and since this was the third time Tonty had visited the lower Mississippi, his presence and experience gave great satisfaction.

In the camp itself, however, there was no comfort, for the cabins were not ready, the men lacked shelter, and the weather was bitterly cold. Large fires were maintained, but water froze a few feet from the blaze. Father Du Rhu says it was colder than he had known it for five years in France. Then the weather moderated, and rather unexpectedly Iberville ordered the advance. Du Rhu, whose relation we quote, is a captious critic

and his own sufferings are his principal theme, yet the journey up the river was by no means pleasant. For instance, he says, on February 21, "scenery all about the same—nothing but cane and large woods—Lord, how it rains, absolutely drowned yet we keep going—our clothes dry on us and we box the compass in the many turns on the river. We land for the night very tired and knee deep in mud. We try to dry blankets and clothes before the small fire but it rains again in the midst of all. We have our backs to the rain all night long and we still eat coarsely ground corn—always corn diluted with the muddy water of the river."

The only occurrence that Du Rhu mentions with enthusiasm is the meeting with Le Sueur whom they overtook on a portage. He had come over with Iberville and was going to Minnesota on a geological expedition in the first decked boat that sailed the river. This meeting was a notable event, for Le Sueur gave his weary countrymen a feast that warmed their hearts into paeans of praise. Du Rhu was loath to leave these flesh pots, but the expedition had an imperious commander to whom food was fuel and nothing more. So after a brief delay they bade Le Sueur farewell and hastened on. The days were much alike. From daybreak till dark they toiled through the rain against the swift current and ate as best they could their coarse

corn. The scenery was not impressive except for its extent, but in those first voyages everything that happened about the river had its significance, and particularly was Du Rhu interested in the much-discussed "fork" of the river described by Hennepin, cursed by Iberville, and source of debate by historians ever since. Du Rhu's relation locates it about twelve miles below the village of the Baygoulas, but he says nobody would have noticed it if it had not been pointed out, since there are a hundred places on the river that more nearly answer the description. He is quite disgusted with his spiritual brother, and the rivalry between his Jesuit order and the Recollects permits him to express himself about Hennepin right vigorously.

The journey was a diplomatic and military expedition into a country potentially hostile, so every precaution was observed to keep the natives along the shores friendly and respectful. The first important tribe encountered was that of the Baygoulas, and the French halted a few miles below their landing-place to prepare themselves for the event.

The party made its official entry upon the village with great stateliness and pomp. All the lessons learned from experience with the Canadian Indians were profitably practiced in the South. Three days were spent in the interchange of courtesies and ceremonials with the Baygoulas, during which Iberville

learned that Englishmen among the Chickasaws were devising plots against the French missionaries and Tonty was detailed to command a detachment and to take by force, if necessary, the Englishmen from that tribe.

So the expedition divided. Iberville went on to the Natchez nation to arrange with them a treaty of friendship and to prepare with Bienville for an expedition up Red River, while Tonty returned to the new fort (La Boulaye) to secure the equipment for his enterprise. In some way he there learned that the two Englishmen he was sent to capture were so well supported by the Chickasaw nation that the capture would be impracticable without bringing on a Chickasaw war, which was highly undesirable.

Nevertheless Tonty finished his preparations and advanced up the river. At the village of the Oumas he met Iberville, who had been compelled by illness to turn over the command of the Red River expedition to Bienville while he hurried back to the fleet. It seemed best after some discussion to abandon the Chickasaw enterprise, and Tonty continued up the river toward Starved Rock with his heavily laden canoes.

Leaving the Mississippi, he branched off into the gentler waters of the Illinois. Spring had scarcely begun and the prairies were dotted with great herds of buffalo looming high and dark against the dead grass. On

either side the channel was bordered with swamps of tangled grass and red furze and extensive lowlands partly overflowed, from which protruded great stumps and confused piles of gray and fallen timber. Gradually the valley narrowed, the forested ramparts approached the river, and occasionally a cliff of bare sandstone shouldered its way to the water. On the highest and most conspicuous of these cliffs was Fort St. Louis.

Promptly upon his arrival Tonty took steps to discover the relations of the neighboring tribes to the English, and learned that their faith and interest in the French was already wavering under hostile influences. Such was the report he despatched to Biloxi, where Iberville had arrived only to learn that his other rivals, the Spaniards, had in his absence paid a ceremonial visit to the colony. This visit, ostensibly friendly, was made in such force that the French felt assured that the Spanish had come with a sinister intent which only their preparedness and diplomacy had foiled.

In May, 1700, Iberville took his ships to France, and shortly thereafter Tonty must have come to Biloxi, for Sauvole says that although food was scarce and the mutinous Canadians a source of tribulation, yet he intended to care for them and furnish them supplies as long as possible, as well as to Tonty and the missionaries. The food supply was a serious problem in the little colony, the more

so since the irresponsible *voyageurs* and colonists would not till the soil, but drifted hither and thither and spent their time either in hunting, searching for pearls, or flirting with the none too diffident Indian girls. There were few native products to be sent out, and but few ships came in, and those only when ordered. The "Enflamme" was one of these, and as soon as possible she was sent to San Domingo and France to fetch provisions. So strict were the orders in those early days of "protection," that when she sailed Governor Sauvole's principal satisfaction in her departure arose from his success in preventing her from carrying off the beaver skins which the *voyageurs* had brought down the Mississippi. Calliérès, the governor of Canada, had already made official protest against this diversion of trade from his own colony and the King was disposed to support him. Calliérès was glad to have the colonies established on the Gulf, but he thought they should be made a part of Canada and contribute to her welfare and his own aggrandizement. Being unwilling to assume any share of the burden, and unreasonably jealous of the feeble little settlement in the South, he even refused to allow a post to be established on the Miami River which Tonty had wished to erect in conjunction with La Forest and the Jesuits.

Meanwhile Tonty, who had journeyed to Mackinac to arrange for this post if possible,

returned to Biloxi about the middle of December, 1701. He found Sauvole dead and Bienville in command of the colony. Shortly after his arrival, there came a swift shallop from Pensacola announcing Iberville's return with two frigates and a large supply of provisions. This news was most welcome to the hungry garrison, but Bienville was especially pleased to learn that two more of his brothers, Le Moyne de Chateauguay and Le Moyne de Serigny, had accompanied Iberville.

The shallop also brought orders that the colony should move at once to a new site on the Mobile River. The difference between the French and English colonies is nowhere better illustrated than in the ease and celerity with which the French made a change of base. The colonists were not convened to debate the question and pass resolutions—not at all; the order was given, the day set, and at the appointed time all were in motion. Only twenty men were left under Boisbriand to hold Biloxi while the rest under Bienville and Tonty set out for Mobile. On Dauphine Island, at the mouth of Mobile Bay, they found Serigny and Chateauguay busily constructing a royal magazine. The bay itself was a scene of activity. Canoes rushed here and there, traversiers moved back and forth between the ships and various parts of the bay, and from the fleet itself the supplies were rapidly unloaded. Bienville and Tonty went up the Mobile

River to select the new location and start the clearing. Iberville arrived at Dauphine Island from Pensacola a few days later and took his frigate over the bar into Mobile Bay. Thence by small boats he started for the river.

On March 3 he reached the site of Mobile twenty-seven miles up Mobile River from the present city. The sound of axes and the crash of falling timber met him on every side. A boat was building for service on river and bay, and a fort with four bastions was in process of erection.

The establishment was located on the river bank elevated twenty feet above the water and surrounded by the myriad stems of white and red oaks, laurels, sassafras, sycamore, and black walnut trees. However, it was upon the illimitable forests of Norway pine that the eyes of the sailor, Iberville, rested with the most delight, not on account of the elegance and stateliness of the growth, but because the tall, tapering, and almost branchless boles were so readily available for masts. Nor yet was he insensible to the charms of the place, for he reports that the shores and all the neighboring country for leagues beside the winding river were perfectly beautiful. With great satisfaction he laid out the lines of the city and made the allotments to the colonists.

Beautiful as it was upon the river, the colony was not moved from Biloxi for this reason, nor on account of the excellent harbor, nor yet

because it was convenient for the Indian trade, although all these advantages had their weight, but the real reason was political. At Mobile the colony was well placed to be a thorn in the side of England and a constant menace to Spain. With this in view the friendship and trade of the neighboring Indians was most vital to success, so couriers were sent out to summon the Mobilians, Tohomes, and Alabamas to conference. The Choctaws and Chickasaws were more distant, but they were also far more numerous and more warlike. The Chickasaws furthermore were in close touch with the English and kindly disposed toward them, which made the mission to them one of difficulty and danger. This important embassy could be conducted only by Tonty. Iberville ordered that Tonty should be abundantly supplied with merchandise for presents, and he adds the characteristic note, "if the supplies cannot be furnished from the Royal Magazine let him get them from the Commissary and I will pay for them."

There are three so-called "trading-paths" between the Tennessee River and the Gulf which formed, says Adair, the principal routes of communication. These followed, and indeed grew out of, the north-and-south migrations of the buffalo herds as they changed their feeding-grounds.

The most easterly left the Mobile River near its junction with the bay, and, running

northwesterly through the present town of Citronelle, led to the large Choctaw village of Hiowanna near the present town of Shubuta on the Chickasaway River. Then, following a generally northern direction along the watershed between the Chickasaway and Tombigbee Rivers, it passed through the principal Choctaw towns and was lost at last in the midst of the Chickasaw country.

To secure better hunting the villages were widely scattered. The headwaters of the Pearl and Chickasaway Rivers interpenetrate like the crowded tops of adjacent trees, and among these myriad creeks and streams the Choctaw villages were sprinkled in fruit-like profusion. Still farther north was the Chickasaw nation, less numerous but fiercer and less tractable than the Choctaws, and strongly under the English influence. Like the Choctaws also, their towns were located among the interpenetrations of the eastward branch of the Yazoo River, arching to its source among the hills of northern Mississippi and the multiple creeks which gather to form the twin heads of the Tombigbee River. At this point the "trading-path" from the south ended, but hither also ran good trails from the north, from the Mississippi River, and also, unhappily for the French, from Carolina.

The trail from Mobile was the basis of the old "Tennessee Road," and over this path traveled Tonty with his little party of eight

A section from a MS map entitled: "A Map of the Southern Indian District of North America. Compiled under the direction of John Stuart, Esq., His Majesty's Superintendant of Indian Affairs. By Joseph Purcell." [Undated *ca.* 1765.] (Edward E. Ayer collection of the Newberry Library.) The red line indicates Tonty's Expeditions.

Frenchmen and two Indian guides. On the south he left the vast low, sandy barrens, covered thickly with long, coarse grass, canes, reeds, and sedge, interspersed with pines, bays, and laurels, an evergreen thicket almost impenetrable to sunlight, but on this account the chosen resort of wildcats, bears, wolves, and panthers, who found a secure retreat and an abundance of food in its deep and tangled fastnesses. Ponds surrounded by oak woods lay embosomed like jewels, and forests were set like emeralds amid a wealth of silver waters.

Near the rivers, swamps were numerous, and giant cypress trees raised their lofty heads into the heavy vaporous atmosphere. As Tonty pressed on toward the north the sand became orange in color and was covered with fine grass and herbage, abundantly shaded. Live oak, hickory, poplar, magnolia, walnut trees, and ghostly sycamores appeared, the limbs of which were heavily festooned with Spanish moss and interlaced with huge vines. Wild turkeys fattened on the fruits and nuts that dropped to the ground, buzzards soared on ragged wing high overhead, while the tree tops resounded with the harsh cries of gaily colored paroquets and the liquid notes of mocking-birds.

Through this great artery two hundred and fifty miles long pulsed the life of the tribes; here the solitary Indian lurked like a shadow,

or long files of painted warriors sped swiftly in search of their prey.

But Tonty's mission was more prosaic. He bore not the war club and tomahawk as portents of strife, but the white swan's wings as emblems of peace. From village to village and from chieftain to chieftain, he carried the call to the Council. Among the Choctaws,[1] as usual, he met with a cordial reception and quick response. Then leaving their friendly tepees he marched northward through the vast savannahs that form the southern portion of the Chickasaw domain. As he neared the end of his journey the spring storms began and the lowlands and swamps became almost impassable morasses. The travelers sank to their thighs in water and soft mud, while overhead the continuous rains kept them drenched to the skin. Upon arriving at the villages Tonty found that the physical difficulties of the journey were trivial in comparison with the business diplomatic. To secure the interest and favor of the English-loving Chickasaws demanded all his tact and experience. Stately conferences accompanied by presents were followed in dignified sequence by large ceremonious councils with much oratory. Gradually the suspicion and unfriendliness of the Indians diminished. The

[1] Halbert, the historian, in a personal communication, expressed the belief that Tonty did not visit the Choctaws until the homeward journey.

gifts and skilful eloquence of the Frenchman prevailed. The Calumet was danced, the delegates appointed, and Tonty started homeward.

On March 19 a runner came post haste to Iberville announcing that Tonty had left the Choctaw villages for Mobile on March 14, with a party of seven Chickasaw chiefs and four Choctaws. Five days later another message was brought in saying that Tonty was among the Tohomes and would enter Mobile on the 25th with his embassy.

The little settlement was fittingly prepared for the reception and at eleven o'clock Tonty arrived with his delegation. Iberville received the savages with impressive dignity and with the elaborate ceremony so dear to barbaric hearts. Many presents were distributed, and the following day was appointed for the council.

Morning came and the chiefs were assembled. Bienville, the master of Indian dialects, interpreted sympathetically for his brother, just as their famous father had interpreted for Frontenac in the ever-memorable council at Cataraqui. With a generous display of additional presents before their eyes, Iberville painted for the Indians in blackest colors the insidious designs of the English. He portrayed them arming tribe against tribe until enfeebled by internecine strife the broken remnants would fall an easy prey to the avaricious English slave traders.

He enumerated their murdered brethren and those already enslaved, and showed how the steady invasion of the English would soon overwhelm their lands. Then he pronounced a glowing tribute on the French, their desire to live at peace with their Indian neighbors who would be benefited by the merchandise and trade, and emphasized the justice and protection that would come with the French dominion.

Next, for fear the Indians might forget his arguments, either through stupidity, eagerness for war, or the predilection of the Chickasaws for the English, he added a few threats. "If the badly advised Chickasaws do not become enemies of the English and friends of the French as the Choctaws have done, then," he assured them, "he would arm the Choctaws, Tohomes, Mobilians, and Natchez against them and instead of restraining the Illinois Indians as hitherto, he would incite them to war upon the Chickasaws. But if the Chickasaws and Choctaws continued at peace," he added, "he would establish a trading station on the upper waters of the Tombigbee between the two nations to which each could resort with convenience and safety." Having finished his harangue, he distributed the presents and ostentatiously bought back from the Chickasaws a Choctaw slave who had been obtained from the English. Under the influence of this rare mixture of flattery,

argument, menace, and bribe—particularly the latter—the savages expressed themselves as quite convinced and desirous of peace. To Iberville, also, the conference gave great satisfaction, for he computed that by this treaty he had leagued to France about 2,000 Chickasaws and 4,000 Choctaws.

Even the commissary La Salle, notoriously hostile to Iberville and his "league of brothers," as he was pleased to call them, was moved to say in his report that the colony was under great obligations to MM. Iberville and Tonty who have conducted this most important negotiation.

At the conclusion of the peace conference Tonty made one of his mysterious trips away from the colony. Only by incidental reference too brief to permit deductions, do we learn of his journeyings, and rarely do the records say whither. It might be in this instance that he took men and supplies up the Tombigbee River to plant the new station, since Iberville writes to the minister that he had established such a post 210 miles up the Tombigbee between the tribes of the Chickasaws and Choctaws and put Tonty in charge, or he may have returned with the Indians to reinforce their several reports; but at all events from some inscrutable expedition Penicaut relates that Tonty hastened back in the hope of seeing Iberville before his departure, but the ship had sailed only a few days before.

It was fortunate, indeed, for Tonty that he had made new friends, for at this time came the royal decree which required the discontinuance of Fort St. Louis at "Starved Rock," and henceforth Tonty made his home at Mobile. The environment was doubtless most congenial. In the old map of Fort Louis de la Mobile we find his plot of ground just west of the fort surrounded and by such names as Bienville, Boisbriand, Le Sueur, and the romantic St. Denis. In this little colony of one hundred and thirty people rested the entire defense and title of the French to the vast territory of Louisiana extending from the Gulf to the Great Lakes and from the vague English boundaries on the east to the Rocky Mountains. Here also was the governor, Le Moyne de Bienville, a youth of twenty-two.

Little or no mention of Tonty appears in the scanty records of the next year, but we know that the settlement, so small and weak, was by no means spiritless. It was a busy center of intrigue, diplomacy, and war, and we can well believe that the wisdom and experience of Tonty was a comfort and support to the young governor into whose adroit, tactful, and masterful hands all threads ran.

As King says, "Bienville was wrestling with the English and Indians and cajoling the Spaniards for the territory he occupied, as well as fighting the suspicion, distrust, and

calumny of those beneath him. Warding off famine and disease with one hand and guiding his leash of turbulent Canadians with the other, nevertheless he seems to have conducted his administration through the torpid encouragement of his superior, and the active insults of his inferiors with the same stolidity of determination with which he conducted his pioneers through the freezing swamps of the Red River country."

Everywhere were unrest, discord, and primal passions striving for expression, yet with bribe and caress, with menace and blow, Bienville controlled the enemy, both white and red, and led his colony forward.

The war of the Spanish succession broke out, and into the villages and cornfields of the French and Spanish Indians came the enterprising invaders from Carolina. At the same time the French and Spanish stations on the seaboard were kept in tense expectancy of the English fleet.

The Spanish, badly provided with arms and food, usually shut themselves in their forts and sent frantic appeals for aid to Bienville, and he, realizing clearly the necessity of forming the Spaniards as well as the Indians into buffer nations to fend off the English, generally responded with supplies of food or munitions of war, or both.

All the tribes east of the Mississippi were kept in a ferment by the English traders, so

that one uprising after another took place, the French missionaries were killed, tribe warred against tribe, and village after village was destroyed. In consequence the infant colony, barely able to stand on its own feet, must stagger out to succor the Spanish, punish the revolting tribes, or avenge the murder of a countryman.

The killing of a Frenchman was an affront that could not go unpunished, but when Father Davion came down the Mississippi and reported the murder of a missionary by the Coroas, the French establishment was so small and feeble that Bienville delegated the Arkansas Indians to avenge it. They undertook the commission joyfully and executed it mercilessly. It was the aim of the French to secure obedience and subjection rather than extermination, and for this reason the infliction of punishment was rarely left to the Indians alone, for they were too radical. The next conflict was with the Alabamas, or Upper Creeks, whose principal towns occupied the site of the present city of Montgomery (Alabama), and extended along the banks of the Tallapoosa for many miles to the east and north.

At no time in the absence of the ships did the colony have an excess of provisions, and Bienville constantly tried to protect his granary, either by sending some of his men to take a much-coveted holiday among the

Indians, or by buying food from the tribes whenever it was possible. Recognizing these conditions, the Alabamas were instigated by the English to come down the river with the story that the English had forsaken them and that they had corn to spare. Upon this information a detail of five men under Lieutenant Labrie was sent back with the party of Alabamas to purchase a supply.

Three weeks later Labrie returned with a broken arm and reported that after passing in perfect security and good-will through the villages of the neighboring tribes, they came to a point about two days' march from the Alabama villages when their guides announced that they would go forward and prepare the chiefs to receive them suitably. Upon this pretext they disappeared, but the same night they returned in force and murdered all but Labrie, who fortunately escaped by jumping into the river, although a well-aimed hatchet broke his arm.

It was impossible to overlook such an offense, and Bienville notified the Mobilians and Tohomes to prepare for war. With Tonty and St. Denis as associates in command, the force, about two hundred strong, started up the river. It was planned to ascend the Mobile and Alabama Rivers, then land at some convenient point, and by marching rapidly across the country fall upon and surprise the Alabamas.

The Mobilians were the main reliance of the French as counselors, guides, and burden-bearers, but it was soon discovered that they secretly sympathized with the Alabamas and that their principal business was to cause delay. After advancing for eighteen days the French leaders realized that most of the Indian contingent had deserted; that the guides had caused much useless labor, and probably had warned the Alabamas, so the expedition was abandoned and the troop returned home, as Penicaut remarks, in four days.

The expedition was abandoned, but by no means the vengeance. Some days later Bienville gathered a fleet of ten canoes and with Tonty and St. Denis left secretly with a force entirely French. In twelve days they reached the spot where the four Frenchmen had been killed. Here they discovered the camp-fires of the Alabamas and a number of loaded canoes drawn up on the shore. It was a large hunting party. Bienville was for attacking at once, but Tonty and St. Denis voted for delay and a night attack. Scouts were sent out to locate the camp, and the French dropped back a couple of miles to wait for darkness. At the proper time they pushed cautiously up the stream, landed, and picked their way through the dense underbrush toward the enemy.

The Alabamas were encamped on a bluff difficult of access, to which the only approach

was through a thicket of brambles and vines. When the fires had burned down to a dim red glow Bienville thought the Indians were asleep and ordered the advance. As they went forward in single file, a Canadian stepped on a cane which broke with a loud snap, and instantly a cry of alarm went up from the lodges, while every Frenchman stood still in his tracks.

There being no repetition of the noise the Indians quickly settled down and after some delay the French again advanced. As they drew near their footfalls were heard by the wary savages; the war cry arose from all sides; a gun was fired and a Frenchman fell. The Indian women and children fled deep into the forest, protected by the warriors who retreated slowly after. All but four escaped, because the darkness was so dense that the French could not see where to aim. Bienville and his men remained in the camp all night, but the Indians did not return. Finding no trace of the enemy at daybreak they burned the cabins and conveyed the captured canoes to Mobile laden with the corn and hunting booty of the Indians.

It was thought that still further punishment was necessary, so a price was fixed on the scalps of the Alabamas and Boisbriand and forty men marched against them.

Another expedition was despatched against the Chetimachas who murdered Father St.

Cosme, and yet another into the Alabama country.

Thus the months passed in warfare and diplomacy, and it is certain that Tonty bore his full share in all the concerns of the colony. The little establishment was holding on and gradually elbowing a place for itself when in August, 1703, the "Loire" arrived from France with seventeen passengers and six thousand livres of money as well as much needed supplies and provisions. The reinforcement was timely and greatly encouraged the colonists.

Iberville meantime had been named governor and commander-in-chief of all the French possessions on the Gulf and along the Mississippi, but ill health detained him in France. Nevertheless in August, 1704, he sent out the "Pelican" loaded with live stock, food, merchandise, and everything that Iberville thought could be useful to the new settlement. With her also came sixty-five soldiers, part of Chateauguay's company, De la Vente, the missionary, fated to be another thorn in the side of Bienville, and twenty-three girls of good family, by means of whom it was hoped the irresponsible, roving *coureurs de bois* might be domesticated and anchored to the colony.

It seemed at last as if the colony must thrive and prosperity would crown the lean years of adversity, but while giving with a liberal hand Fate smote with the other. The "Pelican" had touched at San Domingo

and brought with her the yellow fever. It was September, the pestilential month in the South, and the epidemic slew the inhabitants with indiscriminate zeal. Two-thirds of the colonists went down. The "Pelican" lost half of her crew. Thirty of the newly arrived soldiers died together with Dougè, the Jesuit, and Le Vasseur. Laboring with the sick and assisting the well was Tonty until at last he, too, succumbed to the pest, and the great valley which had been his particular care and home for so many years knew him no more—even in death. Somewhere on the bank of the muddy Mobile, not far from the Gulf of Mexico, he lies at rest in an unknown grave.

In behalf of the poor, struggling colony, he laid down the life which for twenty-five years he had dedicated to a dream of empire. In later times, indeed, the Mississippi Valley was destined to fulfil his ambitious vision, but in a manner strangely different from his patriotic ideal.

The character of Tonty has called forth the warmest admiration from all students of his life and period. His steadfast loyalty was primarily the expression of his rare unselfishness, but also it was evidence of a lofty spirit which sacrificed personal ambition to the attainment of noble ends. If he lacked the dominating personality of La Salle and the imperial imagination of Iberville, he was none

the less a strong and influential chieftain. If he lacked the impulsive emotionalism that captivates the souls of men and leads them to victory or perdition with an equal enthusiasm, he was nevertheless a practical far-seeing man of affairs, whose actions were always controlled by the head.

His were not the quick decisions born of intuition, but rather the discriminating judgments of an unperturbed mentality. His laconic statement about the "Griffon" that "the vessel was completed during the spring of 1679" reminds us of later captains whose simple words, "We have met the enemy and they are ours"; "When you are ready, Gridley, you may fire," have endeared them to us far beyond their victories.

In courage, intrepidity, and innate diplomacy he was unexcelled, while his noble endurance of neglect, of injustice and the buffetings of fate, together with his early death give to his life a pathos that was lacking in many heroes.

In him also may be detected a love of wandering, an unflagging energy and a zeal for chivalrous emprise—those elemental traits that seek expression in elemental environment and elemental contests.

Not for him the blood made thick and sickly by the fetid vapors of the money changers, but rather the joy of the wide spaces and the stirring conflict with the wilderness. These,

the true inheritance of knight-errantry, purge the spirit and make it strong and clean and active—a discipline of the soul.

This it was which drove him over huddled seas, up the heights of adventurous circumstance, and into unknown lands. Never more did he return to France, but from the forest-crowned cliffs of the Illinois to the steaming swamps of the South he wandered uneasily to and fro. Watching, waiting, longing, and striving, he followed the call of the river; over his great soul, like a mantle, the Father of Waters had thrown an imperious spell; under this spell he lived and under its fateful charm he died—eminently unfortunate, yes, but how eminently human!

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